The History

OF THE

Lancashire Fusiliers

1914-1918

IN TWO VOLUMES

By

Major-General J. C. Latter, C.B.E., M.C.

VOLUME I

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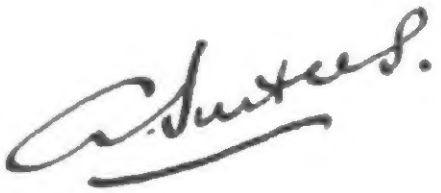
FOREWORD

THE Preface outlines the sequence of events in the compilation of this history. Early in 1946, on my appointment as Colonel of the Regiment, I formed a committee, under the chairmanship of Brigadier L. C. Mandleberg, to advise me whether the project should be continued or abandoned. The committee unanimously endorsed my own opinion that the Regiment's unsurpassed record in the 1914-1918 war, and the effort already expended, amply justified completion, despite the delay.

Major-General J. C. Latter readily accepted the task, and to him the lasting gratitude of the Regiment is due. The devotion of his scanty leisure over so many years, and the resumption after more than six years of war, demanded a degree of courage and determination which would have daunted most of us. But such qualities alone would not have sufficed without the inspiration of a fervent desire to serve the Regiment, and only such inspiration could have sustained him in his laborious task.

His achievement is thus in the best XX spirit, and his reward lies in the high standard and lasting nature of his work, and the grateful appreciation of the Regiment.

I also have to acknowledge the gratitude of the Regiment to all those enumerated in the Preface for their contribution, and particularly to Major G. C. Hutchinson for his devoted and invaluable preparatory work and planning.



Major-General,
Colonel, XX The Lancashire Fusiliers.

PREFACE

THE appearance of this History thirty years after the last of the events described in it calls for some explanation.

Its compilation was decided on soon after Major-General G. H. B. Freeth, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. (for whom Major-General G. J. Farmar, C.B., C.M.G., acted during his absence in India from 1927 to 1931) became Colonel of the Regiment in 1926. Captain G. C. Hutchinson, M.C. (later Major G. C. Hutchinson, M.C., T.D., K.C., M.P.) undertook the task of writing it. In 1931 an appeal was made through the Press for diaries, letters and other material, which met with a very satisfactory response. Captain Hutchinson sorted the many contributions into battalion portfolios, arranged for the copying from official sources of details of the decorations awarded to all ranks (including the citations for the senior gallantry awards, a mine of vital interest for the narrative), planned the lay-out of the two volumes and wrote Chapter I of Volume I. But the heavy demands made on his time by his work at the Bar and in local government and by his candidature for Parliament compelled him to relinquish the task in 1935. The Colonel of the Regiment asked me to take it over ; and, after some hesitation (for I had recently assumed a newly created staff appointment) but with a deep appreciation of the honour done to me, I agreed. I must place on record the great debt of gratitude which I—and the Regiment—owe to Geoffrey Hutchinson for his invaluable preparatory work and for his planning, which I have been able to use almost without modification.

Transfers in 1936 and 1939 to other staff appointments, and the ever-increasing tempo of military work as hurried preparations were made to meet the German menace, prevented me from working on the History or conducting the extensive correspondence needed to clear up doubts and amplify narratives, except at some week-ends and during leave. The writing of the first draft of the narrative had however reached 6th October, 1918, and Chapter I and most of Chapter IV of Volume II were in galley proof, when the outbreak of war in 1939 forced me to stop work and store all the material. It was by a comparatively narrow margin that Hitler had beaten me in the race ! At the request of the present Colonel of the Regiment, Major-General G. Surtees, C.B., C.B.E., M.C., I resumed work in the winter of 1945-6, when I was Deputy Director of the Territorial Army and Army Cadet Force at the War Office ; and again it was only occasional week-ends and leave that I could devote to the task which had by now become all the more difficult because some of those to whom I had wished to refer had died or could not be traced while the memories of many of the survivors had naturally become dim.

Nevertheless, although the publication of this History has been so sadly but unavoidably delayed, it is felt that all interested in the Regiment will welcome a permanent record of the most noteworthy of the great achievements of the Lancashire Fusiliers in the Great War of 1914-1918.

The work owes much to the whole-hearted and active support of the Regimental History Committee under the chairmanship successively of Major L. B. L. Seckham, M.C., Major F. Crawford, M.C. and (since April, 1946) Brigadier L. C. Mandleberg, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., T.D., with Major M. G. Bird, D.S.O., as its Honorary Secretary. Thanks are also due to the following :—

To Major-Generals G. H. B. Freeth, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., and G. Surtees, C.B., C.B.E., M.C.; Air Vice-Marshal Sir W. Tyrrell, K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.; Brigadier-Generals J. D. Crosbie, C.M.G., D.S.O., C. J. Griffin, C.M.G., D.S.O., A. H. Spooner, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., and O. C. Wolley-Dod, C.B., D.S.O.; Brigadiers P. D. W. Dunn, D.S.O., M.C., V. F. S. Hawkins, D.S.O., M.C., L. C. Mandleberg, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., T.D., and G. W. Sutton, C.B.E., D.S.O., T.D.; Colonels A. S. Bates, D.S.O., T.D., G. S. Brighten, D.S.O., O.B.E., J. L. Collins, J. M. A. Graham, D.S.O., E. J. Harrison, T.D., G. S. Lockwood, M.C., T.D., W. B. Pearson, C.M.G., C.B.E., L. M. Robinson, M.C., T.D., G. Scott, D.S.O., T.D., J.P., and B. Shelmerdine, C.B.E., M.C., T.D.; Lieutenant-Colonels J. Ambrose Smith, D. G. Bird, M.C., T.D., W. Bowes, D.S.O., G. S. Brewis, D.S.O., G. S. Castle, M.C., T.D., J. S. Fulton, O.B.E., M.C., J. P. M. Ingham, D.S.O., C. E. Jewels, D.S.O., M.C., R. B. Knott, O.B.E., M.C., R. L. Lees, D.S.O., O.B.E., V.D., T.D., H. C. Lonsdale, G. MacKereth, C.M.G., M.C., O. H. North, D.S.O., C. L. Rougier, M.C., T. Slingsby, M.C., T. F. Tweed, M.C., and J. W. Watkins, D.S.O., M.C.; Wing Commander A. D. Macdonald, M.C.; Majors M. G. Bird, D.S.O., F. C. Braby, M.C., B. E. Cridland, M.C., E. C. Daglish, J. A. Davenport, E. M. Dawson, J. W. Evatt, M.B.E., E. Fairhurst, M.C., A. H. G. Griggs, M.C., J. N. Laverick, D.C.M., F. R. Logan, O.B.E., M.C., G. H. Madeley, G. C. Martin, M.C., E. W. Munday, R. K. Taylor Nightingale, E. W. Sheppard, O.B.E., M.C., and A. H. Thomas; Captains K. T. Blamey, M.C., J.P., M. J. H. Drummond, N. Hall, C. H. C. Hunt, A. S. McIver, M.C., H. B. Pegrum, M.C., C. H. Potter, M.C., A. B. Sackett, M.C., C. Shields, D. L. Waghorn, M.C., D.C.M., S. H. Winterbottom, M.C., and F. Wood, M.C.; Doctor G. F. Rigden, M.C.; the Reverends R. E. G. Newman, M.C., and M. D. Walker, M.C.; Mrs. R. E. Cotton and Mrs. A. Stone; Regimental Serjeant-Major T. Channer; Company Serjeant-Major W. W. Ganly; Messrs. G. E. Benson, F. Haworth, D.C.M., R. M. Owen, M.M., J. Worthington and C. Yates, and others for information, the loan of diaries or maps, or criticisms of drafts for Volume I.

To several of the above and to the Right Reverend H. L. Hornby, M.C., Bishop of Hulme and Rector of Bury ; Colonels R. M. Barlow, M.C., T.D., and R. F. H. Massy-Westropp, M.C. ; Lieutenant-Colonel P. Cleasby-Thompson, M.B.E. ; Majors W. H. Lees and A. H. Peacock, T.D. ; Captains O. Cooper and K. R. Evans ; the Reverend Canon R. L. Hussey, Vicar of the Church of the Sacred Trinity, Salford ; and Mr. S. Hemming for information and help in connexion with Volume II.

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To Major R. R. Willis, V.C., and Brigadier-General W. J. Woodcock, D.S.O., for the first drafts of Chapters V, VI and VII of Volume I.

To Colonel G. F. Page, D.S.O., for writing Chapter XVI of Volume I and for helping to choose the photographs for that volume.

To the following for generously shouldering the complete responsibility for the map named :—

Brigadier L. C. Mandleberg, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., T.D.	Map No. 1 (France and Flanders).
Ex-members of the Regiment in Rochdale and District	Map No. 2 (France and Flanders).
2nd Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers	Map No. 3 (France and Flanders).
An anonymous donor	Map No. 4 (Ypres).
Major A. H. Peacock, T.D. ...	Map No. 5 (Gallipoli).
The late Colonel R. Luker, C.M.G., M.C.	Map No. 6 (Helles).
Major M. G. Bird, D.S.O.	Map No. 8 (Egypt and Sinai).
Lieutenant-Colonel M. W. B. Deane and Captain J. E. Slattery, M.B.E.	Map No. 10 (Macedonia).
Colonel G. F. Page, D.S.O. ...	Map No. 11 (Doiran).

To Colonel G. Scott, D.S.O., T.D., J.P., for a welcome contribution towards the general cost of the other maps.

To Major L. B. L. Seckham, M.C., for compiling the list of Commanding Officers for Chapter II of Volume II, for preparing the special Ypres and Somme Maps, for checking maps by the narrative, and for advice on all the maps.

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To my mother, Mrs. Ruth Latter, for the coloured plate of battalion flashes which forms Chapter III of Volume II.

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To the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office for permission to reproduce the maps used.

To the Curator of the Imperial War Museum for permission to copy the battalion flashes and to use the photographs included in Volume I, and to Mr. Charge and his staff, of the photographic section of the Museum, for help in selecting them.

To Mr. C. S. Seager and Mr. A. L. Kipling of Messrs. Gale and Polden, for their encouragement, help and sound advice at all stages.

Many books were consulted in the preparation of this History, which owes much information to the following :—

The Official History of the War.
The History of the 25th Division.
The Story of the 29th Division.
The History of the 35th Division in the Great War.
The History of the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division.
The Story of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division.
The History of the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers by Captains C. H. Potter, M.C., and A. S. C. Fothergill.
The Salford Brigade.
A Lancashire Brigade in France by Brigadier-General J. W. Sandilands, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

Two other matters should be mentioned. First, it was originally intended to include in Volume II a chapter containing the names of all the fallen with the locations of their graves. It was early apparent that, as explained in Chapter V of Volume II, the latter information could not be given in all cases. And, with the rising costs of production, it later became impossible to include the Roll of Honour in its simple form. The beautiful volumes published by Messrs. Tillotson (Bolton) Limited are, however, available for inspection in certain places, as described in Chapter VI of that volume. Secondly, many officers were attached to battalions of the Regiment from other

regiments, as is inevitable in modern war. Many of them gained decorations while serving with the Regiment, and so helped to increase its lustre. As however they always fully identified themselves with it, the regiments from which they were attached have not been specified. On the other hand, where an officer of another regiment has been appointed to command a battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers, I have thought it right to state the fact.

J. C. LATTER

NABURN, YORK.
April, 1948.

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CHAPTER I

MOBILIZATION AND EMBODIMENT

The Organization of the Regiment in 1914

The interval which elapsed between the end of the South African campaign and the beginning of the European War witnessed changes of a far-reaching nature in the organization and administration of the British Army. South Africa was the grave of the old army of Victorian days. As the prospect of European war in which British troops might be called upon to take part grew menacing, the British military organization was brought more closely into line with that of continental nations. Under the system of "linked battalions," which had been the central feature of Lord Cardwell's reforms, each regiment was constituted of not less than two Regular battalions of long-service professional soldiers, one of which was always abroad and the other at home. This system was retained; but the forces at home were no longer regarded as primarily available for home defence and draft-finding, and came to be looked upon more and more as a potential striking force, capable of being employed at short notice in a foreign theatre of war. With this object they were so organized as to be capable of taking the field overseas as an Expeditionary Force within a very short period after mobilization. The Imperial General Staff was brought into existence. The old Militia, a survival from Napoleon's days, gave way to the Special Reserve, to which was expressly assigned the function of furnishing drafts to the Regular forces in the field. Finally, the Volunteers were transformed into the Territorial Force, and reorganized into fourteen divisions, each complete with the necessary artillery and divisional troops. To this new force was assigned the task of home defence, thus setting free the Regular forces for operations overseas. Although not armed or equipped at the outbreak of war upon identical lines with the Regular troops and not liable for service overseas, it was expected that the Territorial Force at a comparatively early stage after mobilization would be capable of undertaking the role of home defence.

At the outbreak of war, all these changes were reflected in the constitution of the Lancashire Fusiliers. Of the two Regular battalions of the Regiment, the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. V. S. Ormond) was stationed at Karachi, in India. The 2nd Battalion (Major C. J. Griffin) was at the Citadel Barracks, Dover, where it formed one of the units of the 12th Infantry Brigade

(Brigadier-General H. F. M. Wilson, C.B.) in the 4th Division (Major-General T. D'O. Snow, C.B.). The 3rd Battalion (Colonel H. R. Cobbatt) and the 4th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. A. Turner) were Special Reserve units. The Territorial Force battalions were the 5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. Isherwood, V.D.) with headquarters in Bury; the 6th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Rochdale) with headquarters at Rochdale; the 7th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. F. Maclure, T.D.) and the 8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. A. Fallows, T.D.), both of which had their headquarters in Salford. These Territorial Force battalions together formed the Lancashire Fusiliers Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General H. C. Frith) of the East Lancashire Division (Major-General W. Douglas, C.B.).

There was a Depot organization of Regular troops at Wellington Barracks, Bury, under Major J. F. V. Thorne, where the Special Reserve battalions also had their headquarters.

Considerable changes in arms and equipment had been introduced after the South African War. The mobilization equipment for reservists held at the regimental Depot had been carefully overhauled and obsolete patterns had been withdrawn and replaced by up-to-date articles. The work of maintaining these stores of arms, clothing and equipment had rested upon the staffs at the regimental Depot. How exacting this work had been and how thoroughly it had been carried out is shown by the fact that at Wellington Barracks, Bury, no less than 73 inspections had been carried out between 1st April, 1909, and 31st March, 1910, and 25 between 1st April, 1913, and 31st March, 1914.

"Mobilize"

At 4 p.m. on 4th August, 1914, the British Government gave orders for the mobilization of the Army. The order was received by the units of the Regiment and at the Depot at about 6 p.m. on the evening of that day. A party of reservists from Wigan actually arrived at Wellington Barracks in the afternoon under the mistaken impression that mobilization had already been ordered.

The response of the regimental reservists to their mobilization orders was magnificent and bears the highest testimony to the lessons of patriotism and discipline which they had learnt during their service with the Regiment. The strength of the reservists on the books on the 1st August, 1914, was 1,752. Of these 44 were known to be living in the colonies. On 5th August, the first day of mobilization, no less than 1,454 reservists (including 10 serjeants and 62 corporals) had reported at Wellington Barracks. On 1st September, 112 (including 2 serjeants and 5 corporals) still remained upon the reserve. Many of the reservists living in the colonies rejoined later, and only 36 men, some of whom were known to be unfit, ultimately remained unaccounted for.

The physical condition of the reservists was excellent, and their

officers who saw them at the barracks all recorded the fine appearance which they presented on parade. Only 14 were discharged as unfit on mobilization.

The Depot

The arrangements at Wellington Barracks reflected the highest credit upon Major Thorne and upon Captain W. Bowes, the Depot quartermaster, with whom rested responsibility for the clothing and equipment of this large body of reservists and their maintenance before despatch to their unit. Both these officers had accompanied the 3rd Battalion on its annual training, from which they did not return to Bury until 27th July. The N.C.Os. who had been specially trained in mobilization duties had accompanied them, and only the mobilization storeman remained at the barracks. Complete sets of clothing and "necessaries" and two pairs of boots per man, one of which was withdrawn on the first day of mobilization, were maintained at the Depot; and opportunity had been taken when the men presented themselves for their annual course of musketry to check their measurements in order to ensure that the stocks held would correspond as nearly as possible to their requirements on mobilization. The work of checking their measurements had been entrusted to the inspecting camp adjutants, and it is to be feared that the importance of obtaining accurate measurements had not always been fully realized by these young officers. In many cases the records were found to be unreliable and, particularly in the case of boots, it was found that the stocks held according to these measurements were sometimes of smaller sizes than those shown on the soldier's measurement records on his transfer to the reserve. Although full sets of clothing were held, the stores of arms and equipment were not complete, part of the stocks required being kept at the Ordnance Depot at Burscough. Only 1,500 rifles and bayonets and 1,000 sets of web equipment were kept at Bury, and on receipt of mobilization orders Captain Bowes's first act was to telegraph to Burscough for the balance of the necessary arms and equipment. 252 rifles and bayonets and 752 sets of equipment were thus not available for issue before the second day of mobilization (6th August), on which day they reached Bury from the Ordnance Depot. The delay in issuing the equipment caused some little inconvenience, which was aggravated by the fact that it arrived in separate parts, which had to be assembled by the drummers of the 3rd and 4th Battalions, with the assistance of some of the Depot officers. Moreover, most of the reservists, particularly those of Class D, had never seen this pattern of equipment, and some instruction in assembling and fitting was therefore necessary before the men could be dispatched to their units.

Upon mobilization, supplies at the Depot ceased to be drawn from the Army Service Corps, and the messing arrangements at the barracks were accordingly carried out by civilian contractors. These arrangements worked well. Three substantial meals a day

were provided from the Depot cookhouse, and were served to the men in the open, the seating accommodation at the barracks being insufficient for such unaccustomed numbers. Nor was the Depot equipment fully equal to the demands made upon it; in particular there was a shortage of plates, which was overcome by a system of double washings, organized by Captain Bowes. The accommodation at the barracks before the dispatch of the first drafts proved insufficient, and additional accommodation for a number of men had to be improvised at St. Stephen's Schools, about 400 yards from the barracks.

Medical inspection of the men began at 8 a.m. on the first day of mobilization (5th August), and so well did the men rejoin that by 6 p.m. 584 had been found medically fit. So good were the arrangements made by Major Thorne and Captain Bowes that those found fit had been clothed and fully equipped ready to join their units. The first draft of 320 left to join the 2nd Battalion at Dover on the evening of this day. On the following day 648 men were found medically fit, clothed and equipped, and a second draft of 240 left for Dover. On 7th August a further 465 were passed, clothed and equipped, and the final draft of 88 required to complete the establishment of the 2nd Battalion was dispatched.

About 800 reservists who remained at the Depot upon the completion of the 2nd Battalion were posted to the 3rd Battalion. These reservists brought the strength of this unit up to about 1,200 and, on the evening of 8th August, it left for its war station at Hull, where it was quartered in billets. On the same evening the 4th Battalion (Major H. F. Watson, D.S.O.) with a strength of 12 officers and 371 other ranks left Bury for Barrow-in-Furness, as is described in Chapter VIII.

With the departure of the 3rd and 4th Battalions for their stations on the fourth day of mobilization the heavy task of mobilization at the Depot was complete. Its work thereafter is also described in Chapter VIII.

The 2nd Battalion

Meanwhile, at the Citadel Barracks, at Dover, the 2nd Battalion was completing its mobilization under the command of Major C. J. Griffin. In June, 1914, Lieutenant-Colonel W. F. Elmslie had retired on retired pay, and was succeeded in command by Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. K. Butler, a staff officer of high repute who had been promoted from the Dorsetshire Regiment. At the time of his promotion Lieutenant-Colonel Butler was on the staff at Aldershot, where he was retained to complete special work in connection with the manœuvres. At the date of mobilization the 2nd Battalion was thus commanded by Major Griffin, the junior officer of his rank in the Regiment. Major Griffin was then forty years of age and had completed twenty years' service in the Regiment. He had seen active service in South Africa and was present at Spion Kop, where he was severely wounded. He had, however, remained at the front

until the end of the war and had received the Queen's Medal with six clasps and the King's Medal with two clasps. Like so many successful leaders of the British Army, Major Griffin was an Irishman. Possessed of a genial and optimistic temperament, he combined a thoroughly technical knowledge of his profession with that experience which can be gained only in war. By his sound judgment and capacity he was well fitted to be a leader of men in the difficult days which lay before his battalion. He possessed the qualities of leadership in full measure. As a battalion commander, and later as a brigade commander, he inspired and retained the affection and confidence of those under his command. Many wounds and the losing the sight of one eye did not impair his powers of physical endurance.

Upon mobilization the battalion under Major Griffin's command was organized in four companies (each commanded by a mounted officer), a machine-gun section, a transport section and a signalling section. The four-company system had been introduced into the Regular Army in October, 1913, and was working well. The troops were clothed in the regulation khaki service dress uniform, and they were also issued with full dress of scarlet tunic and blue trousers, which was withdrawn on mobilization. They were armed with the Lee-Enfield short magazine rifle, Mark IV, which had been introduced after the South African War. The battalion was equipped with the regulation web equipment but, as already mentioned, many of the reservists had never worn it and on mobilization did not even know how to put it together. The web equipment included an entrenching tool, with a detachable head which was carried on the small of the back below the pack. The shaft of the entrenching tool was attached to the bayonet scabbard.

The machine-gun section was armed with two Vickers machine-guns, which were carried in a general service limber wagon similar in type to the other wagons in the first-line transport. A second limber wagon was available for the carriage of ammunition. The machine-gun officer was mounted.

The regimental first-line transport consisted of four general service limber wagons, which were used for the carriage of ammunition, entrenching tools and light stores. Two pack animals were available for each company to carry additional supplies of ammunition. There were also authorized four travelling kitchens, one of which was allotted to each company, though these were in fact not issued till March, 1915. The establishment of horses was 12 heavy draught, 18 light draught, 12 riding and 8 pack animals—a scale afterwards increased. Two water-carts with filtering apparatus formed part of the mobilization stores; a maltese cart was provided for the medical officer's stores and comforts, and a light cart for the use of the officers' mess.

The band instruments were withdrawn on mobilization and the members of the band, all of whom had been trained in First Aid duties, were distributed amongst the companies as stretcher-bearers.

The 12th Infantry Brigade on mobilization consisted of the 1st Battalion The King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment), the 2nd Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers, the 2nd Battalion The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and the 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment. As already mentioned, the brigade formed part of the 4th Division (Major-General T. D'O. Snow, C.B.); very appropriately so, as the Regiment had served in the 4th Division throughout the Peninsular War, the Crimean War and the South African War. It had been decided that the embarkation of the Expeditionary Force should begin not earlier than 9th August but that the 4th and 6th Divisions should for the present be retained in England, in order to cover the movement of the remainder of the Expeditionary Force. Lord Kitchener, who had become Secretary of State for War on 6th August, accordingly directed that two infantry brigades of the 4th Division should go to Cromer and York, where they would be in a position to meet any attempted landing by the enemy which would have interfered with the movement of the Expeditionary Force, until such time as the defence of the coast could be undertaken by Territorial troops. Orders were accordingly received at Dover to move to Cromer on Saturday, 8th August. This was one day before mobilization was, under the mobilization scheme, to have been completed, and some confusion was introduced by orders being received to move before mobilization was complete. Thanks to the ready response of the reservists and to the excellence of the arrangements at Bury and Dover, these difficulties were overcome, and the last draft left Bury to join the battalion on 7th August. The battalion was thus able to leave Dover at war strength at 3 a.m. on the fourth day of mobilization, and went by train to the stations allotted to it at Cromer.

The two following days were spent in coast defence duties, some training for the benefit of the reservists being also possible. On 11th August the battalion left Cromer for Norwich, where they were billeted until 13th. From Norwich they marched to Costessy Hall, Norfolk, where they were billeted until 17th, when they marched back to Norwich and entrained for North Wembley. The coast defence duty had then been taken over by Yeomanry brigades and Territorial cyclist units; and the 4th Division was now free to join the British Expeditionary Force on the other side of the Channel. On the 19th, G.H.Q. in France was notified that the 4th Division would be sent to the Expeditionary Force area. The battalion was in bivouac at North Wembley until 21st August. On the night of Friday, the 21st, it was conveyed in two trains to Southampton, where it embarked in the transport *Saturnia*, disembarking at Boulogne at 6 a.m. on 23rd August. The strength of the battalion on disembarkation was returned as 27 officers (including the medical officer), 1 warrant officer and 973 other ranks. A party of two officers (Second-Lieutenant A. L. Keigwin and Second-Lieutenant J. S. Paulson) and seventy other ranks who were detailed for baggage duties travelled from Dover to Havre. The total strength of the

2nd Battalion at the date of joining the British Expeditionary Force was 29 officers and 1,043 other ranks. Of the officers, four subalterns were attached from the 3rd Battalion, and 661 of the strength of other ranks were reservists.

The Territorial Battalions

Whilst the Regular troops were gathering their reservists and taking their allotted place in the line of battle, scenes of no less enthusiasm and devotion were witnessed at the headquarters of the Territorial Force units of the Regiment. Mobilization orders were received at about 6 p.m. on 4th August. Telegrams were at once sent to the officers and notices posted to the men to report early on the following morning. Crowds gathered outside the drill halls and the men were received with enthusiasm as they came in to report.

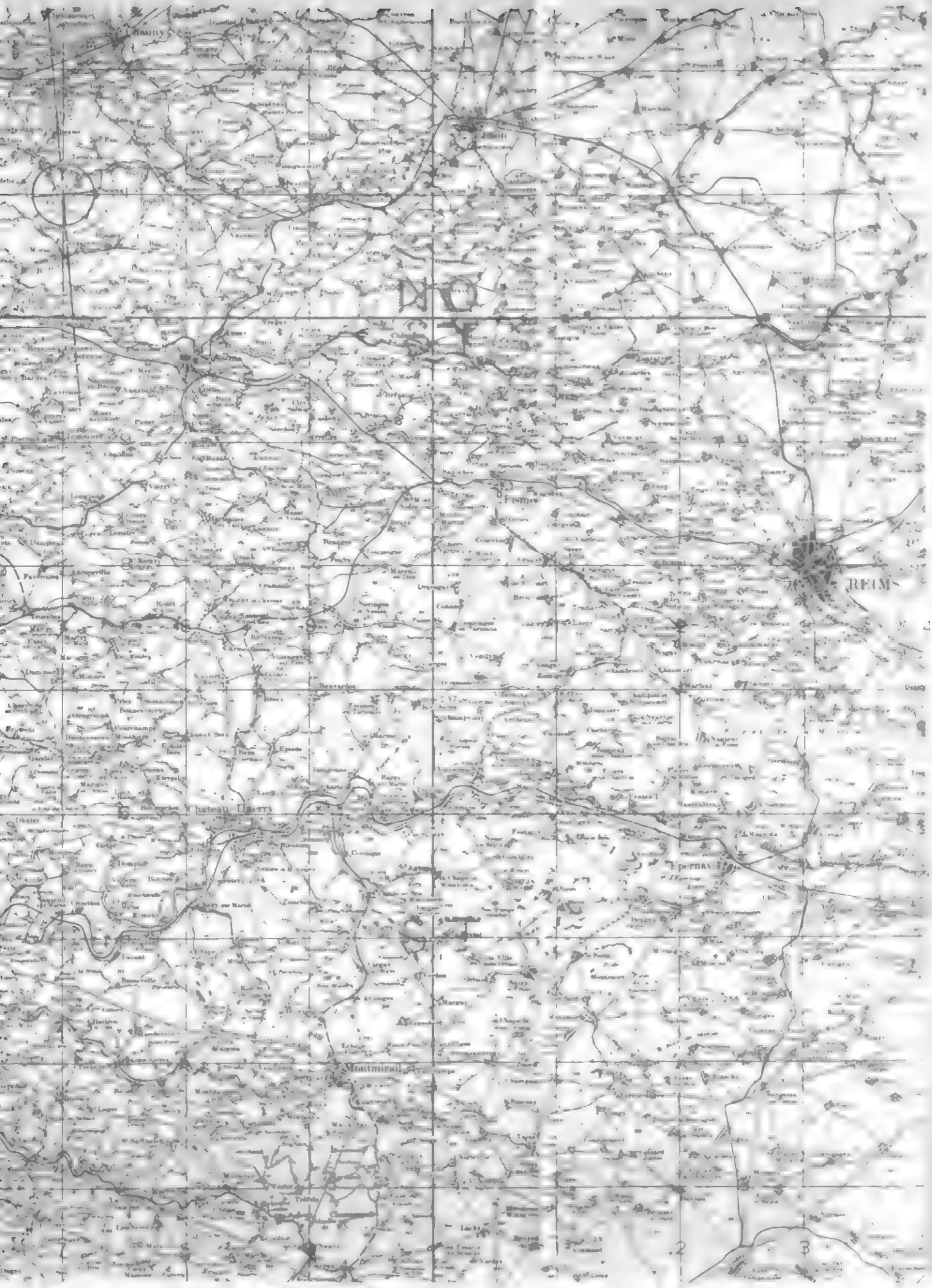
The Territorial Force, on mobilization in 1914, presented certain grave shortcomings both in its constitution and in its equipment and organization. In the first place, there was no obligation to undertake service overseas. The conception of the duties of the Force which this limitation in their obligation implied was a legacy of the old Volunteer days. The Volunteer Corps had originally been formed as irregular riflemen, to supplement Regular troops in the duty of home defence. The idea that this was their primary function, and that it could adequately be discharged within the British Isles, had persisted throughout the Volunteer period, and even the reorganization of 1908 had failed to eradicate it. (Indeed, up to August, 1914, the role allotted to the East Lancashire Division on embodiment was that of coast defence and internal security in Ireland; and, under the mobilization scheme then in force, billeting parties were actually sent to Limerick as soon as the telegram ordering embodiment was received.) The limitations which this conception of its functions placed upon the usefulness of the Territorial Force at once became apparent on mobilization. A call arose for volunteers for foreign service, and in the battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers it was answered with overwhelming enthusiasm and almost with unanimity. Commanding Officers called their men together and their invitation to volunteer for foreign service received a response which, if not unexpected, was in its magnitude an impressive omen of the spirit and devotion of which their battalions were later to give such abundant proofs. An officer who was present in the large chapel of the Central Hall, Salford, when Lieutenant-Colonel Fallows addressed the 8th Battalion has left a description of the scene: "Before the Colonel had well explained what was in the wind, there was a great roar of approval from the men, as practically the whole Battalion rose to signify its assent to the proposal."

On 11th August the War Office called for reports of the number of Territorial units, from brigades down to companies, who would volunteer for foreign service, and also the number of officers, non-commissioned officers and men who would volunteer for active service with other Territorial units. This method of obtaining

organized, the 2nd/5th Battalion was the first second-line Territorial infantry battalion to be sent to the Expeditionary Force. It is a unique distinction that the Territorial battalions of the Regiment should have been the first of their lines to be sent on active service.

On arrival in Egypt, the Lancashire Fusiliers Infantry Brigade was quartered in barracks at Abbassia, near Cairo, and there for the present it will be convenient to leave them and to return to their Regular comrades and the events which were passing in Belgium and France.

PARIS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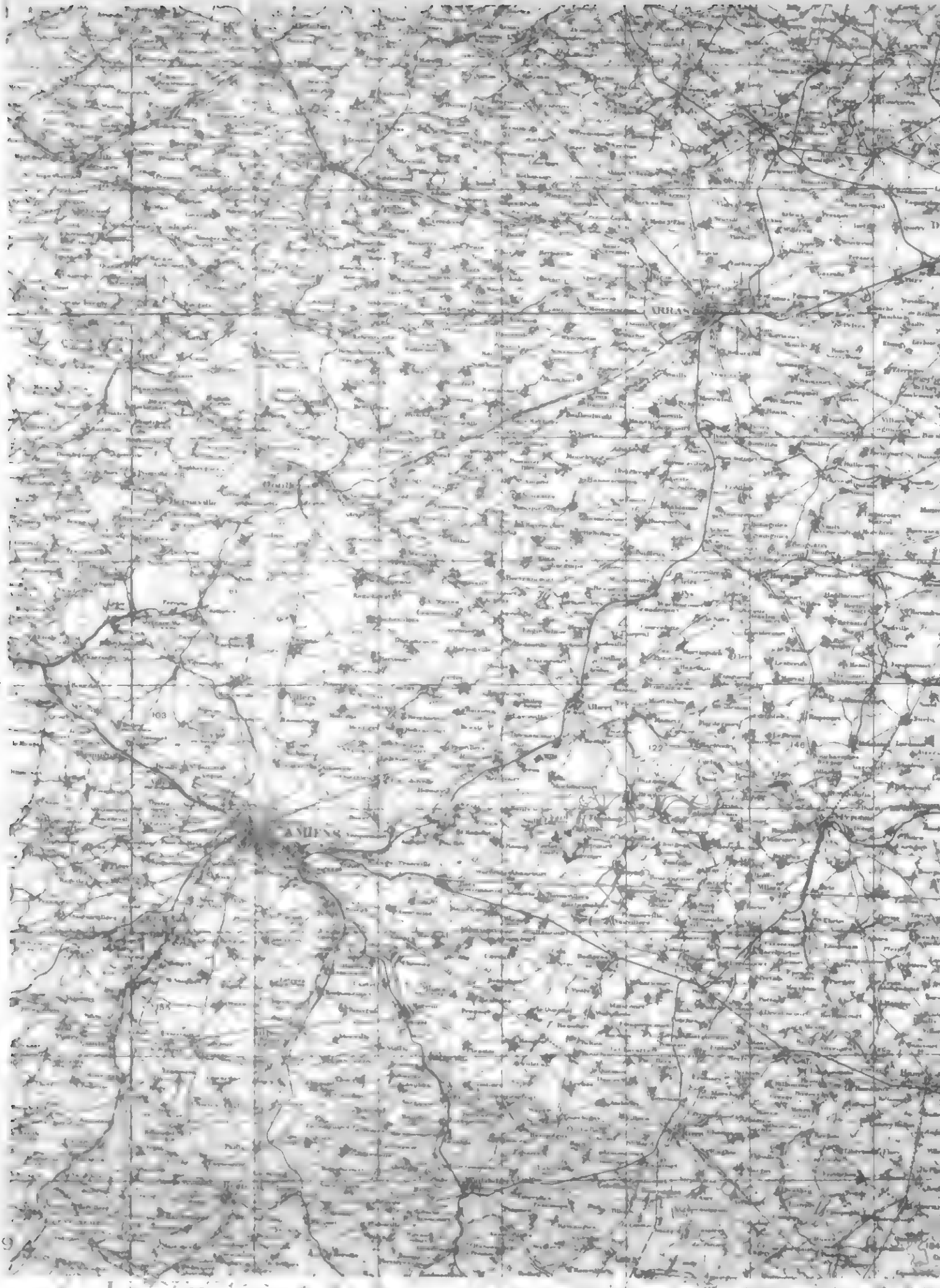
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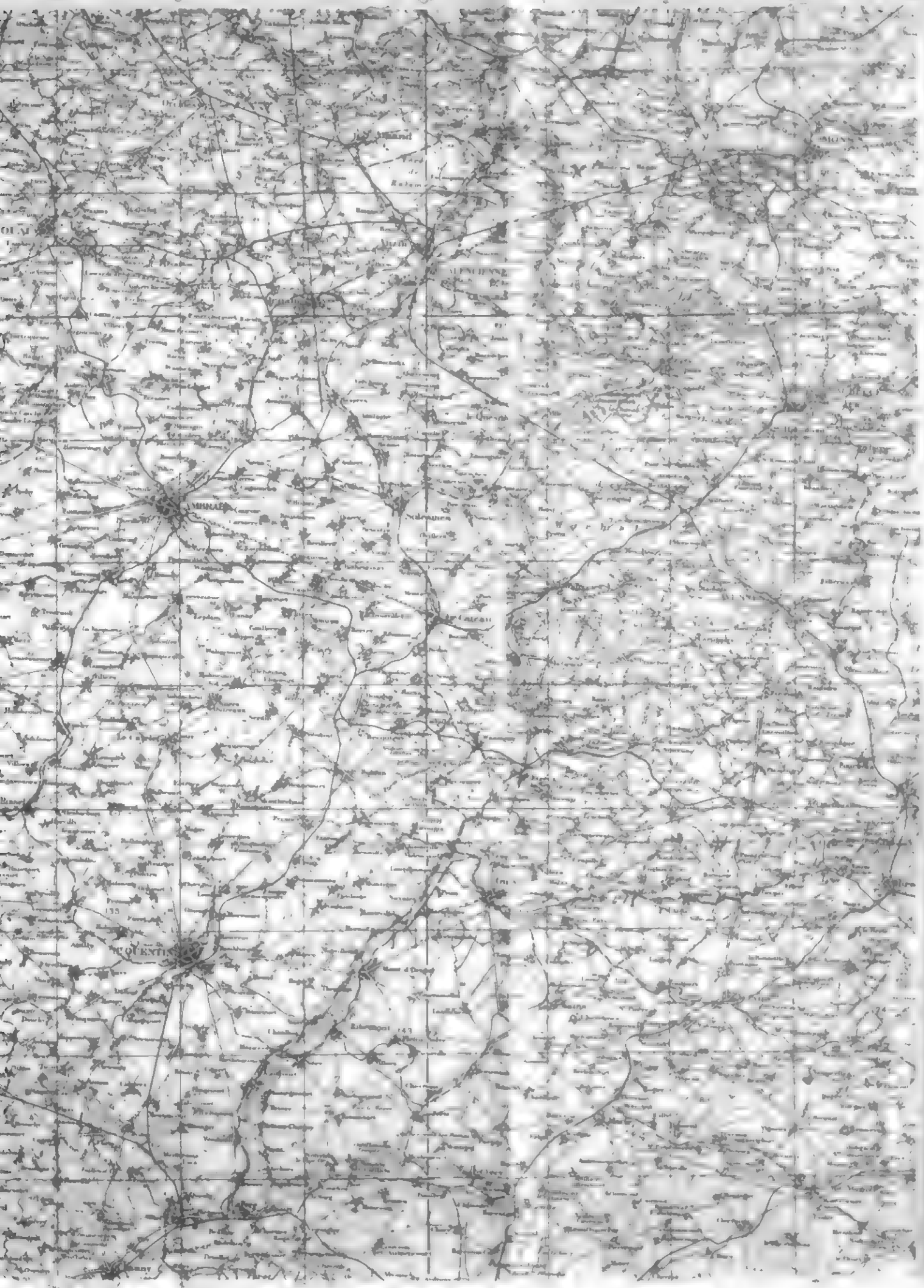
MAP No. 1



CHAPTER II

LE CATEAU AND THE RETREAT FROM MONS

"LE CATEAU," "RETREAT FROM MONS"

(Maps 1 and 2)

2nd Battalion

The Situation

Between the declaration of war on 5th August and the disembarka- 2nd Bn
tion of the 2nd Battalion at Boulogne at 6 a.m. on 23rd August, much had happened. The French plan of campaign was based on a general offensive along their whole front and on the assumption that the right wing of the invading German forces would reach about as far west as Mons. The role allotted to the British Expeditionary Force was to act offensively on the left of the French Fifth Army. The latter's commander, General Lanrezac, was one of the first to realize the complete lack of foundation for the French thesis ; and he took early steps to guard against the fact, daily becoming more evident, that the German attempt at turning the Allied left had a much longer "reach" than General Joffre expected.

The original orders issued to the B.E.F. to advance beyond Mons were therefore changed to an instruction to take up a defensive position at Mons, where on 23rd August determined German attacks in large numbers failed before the excellent marksmanship and coolness of the British 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Divisions. The first two formed the I Corps under Lieutenant-General Sir D. Haig, the remainder the II Corps under General Sir H. Smith-Dorrien. As, however, the French Fifth Army had been compelled to begin a withdrawal, it became obvious that the B.E.F. could no longer maintain its position. During the night of 23rd/24th August, therefore, it fell back and during the 24th reached the line Feignies–Bavai–Saultain. On that day, orders were issued for it to retire to a position near Le Cateau on which it was expected that the whole Force would stand and fight. It was to cover the withdrawal of the 3rd Division on to this line that the 4th Division was pushed up to hold a position south of Solesmes.

The 2nd Battalion had accordingly moved on 24th August by rail from Boulogne to Bertry—a very tiring journey with no halts long enough to be of any use—and, after teas in a field near the station, marched to Ligny, where it bivouacked for the night, the officers of battalion headquarters being most hospitably dined by the mayor. Early next morning (25th August) the 12th Brigade marched

some twelve miles to Viesly, about two and a half miles south-south-west of Solesmes, where it dug in in rain of tropical severity. A few shells, the first to be met by the great majority of the battalion, landed near the trenches, but with no harmful results. The withdrawal of the 3rd Division had been seriously delayed by congestion in and near Solesmes, owing partly to the converging march of the 19th Infantry Brigade and partly to the ever-increasing number of refugees. The latter were much more of a problem to the kind-hearted British, who could not bring themselves to thrust these poor folk and their few belongings piled on carts into the ditch, than they were to the pursuing Germans, who had no such scruples. As a result, it was not until 9.30 p.m. that the battalion started from Viesly to march about five miles back to a position a little to the north-west of Ligny amidst rain and mud.

The Battle of Le Cateau

"LE CATEAU"

The two divisions of II Corps reached their allotted areas on the Le Cateau position so late on 25th August and so utterly tired that, although the Commander-in-Chief (Field-Marshal Sir J. D. P. French) ordered the retirement to be continued on 26th August, General Sir H. Smith-Dorrien came to the conclusion that this would be a physical impossibility and that the only alternative to annihilation was to give the Germans a hard knock where the II Corps stood and then to slip away before they could recover from it. With this end in view, he arranged for the Cavalry Division and 4th Division, up till then operating independently on his left, to act under his orders. This long chain of causes resulted in a thoroughly tired 2nd Battalion reaching the high ground near Longsart Farm, between Haucourt and Wambaix, in pitch darkness at about 3.45 a.m. on 26th August, 1914, to take part in what will for ever live gloriously in the annals of British generalship and soldiering as the Battle of Le Cateau, although at the time it was described in the 2nd Battalion's War Diary as the Battle of Ligny. The tool limbers had stuck in the mud a couple of miles back ; but as soon as it was light enough to see, Major Griffin began to site trenches while Captain H. B. Roffey (who was second-in-command) posted picquets in front. Brigadier-General H. F. M. Wilson, C.B., commanding the 12th Infantry Brigade, came up and gave some directions as to the siting of the line and instructed the battalion to dig some trenches for the King's Own which had been delayed by the congestion of transport in Ligny. Only the men's own entrenching tools were available for this work ; but by 5.45 a.m. two platoons of "A" Company (Captain J. E. S. Woodman) had trenches ready for occupation ; one platoon (Second-Lieutenant G. F. Page's) of "A" Company and the whole of "C" (Captain R. H. M. Moody) and "D" (Captain A. C. Ward, D.S.O.) Companies had dug shallow shelter trenches ; in reserve were one

platoon of "A" Company behind a small bank and "B" Company (Captain J. A. Davenport) near a road, with a high bank on the enemy side of it, which led towards Esnes. The transport was at Longsart Farm. It included a very peculiar, large, barrel-shaped vehicle which did duty as a "cooker" (travelling kitchen), but was smashed by German shell-fire later in the day.

It was the brigadier's intention that a company of the King's Own, which was to come up on the right, should take over part of the trenches dug by the battalion. The King's Own arrived at about 5.45 a.m., halted in quarter column in a root field about fifty yards to the right of "A" Company and close to the Haucourt–Cattenières road and, on the strength of a report from some French gendarmerie or cavalry (the 4th Division had no cavalry at this time) that no Germans were at hand, were proceeding to pile arms and dress the ranks when German machine-gun fire and shrapnel burst upon them, causing 400 casualties in a few minutes. A company of the King's Own which was moving over to the left to take over part of the 2nd Battalion line, and part of "A" Company which had been sent to draw tools for the battalion from wagons which had been brought up by Captain O. H. North, Lancashire Fusiliers, Staff Captain of the 12th Brigade, were also caught and suffered some loss. Nor did the forward companies escape; for the enemy machine guns turned from the King's Own to the Lancashire Fusiliers. At the same time, an attack developed against the whole of the front held by the Battalion. Second-Lieutenant W. K. Humfrey quickly got his two machine guns into action in a trench between "A" and "D" Companies; and although one jammed almost at once and had to be taken to the rear by Serjeant Roch and Private Hartney, Humfrey did good work with the other with the help of Second-Lieutenant J. K. C. Cross, at whose suggestion he moved the gun into the trench occupied by the latter's platoon whence he was able to tackle the enemy more effectively. In the meanwhile, Captain J. A. Davenport collected the men nearest to him and took up a position on the east of the sunken road, where he was joined by Major Griffin. Although the actual delay was doubtless inevitable, it seemed to be between 10 and 11 a.m. before any artillery support was forthcoming. When it did come, it was self-sacrificing and as generous as the meagre supply of ammunition allowed.

As no troops were visible to the left of the battalion's position, though "B" Company (Captain W. M. C. Vandeleur) of the 2nd Essex Regiment was in support slightly in rear of the left of Ward's company, some anxiety was felt as to the situation there; and Captain Roffey went over to see how matters stood. The enemy, having a greater number of machine guns, had begun to work round the battalion's left and to enfilade it. Ward had therefore withdrawn his company a short distance. Roffey considered that a further retirement was imperative; but as he was crossing over to the Essex to arrange it with them, Vandeleur was killed and Roffey was so seriously wounded in the mouth and neck that he was not recognized

a few hours later by Serjeant H. Bibby, the Officers' Mess Serjeant. As he lay wounded at the bottom of the Essex trench, German Jäger arrived and lined the outer edge of the parapet. He saw a German crawl over the parapet, come right up to him, take his revolver from its case and fire at him twice. Nevertheless, Roffey managed to crawl away into a field of corn stooks and later in the day was helped along by the adjutant and some men of the Essex.

It was now about 8 a.m. and Ward's company and Cross's platoon were being seriously harassed by machine-gun fire from behind, which Lieutenant D. E. Boyle and Cross tried to correct. Very shortly after, Ward and Boyle, two devoted friends, were killed instantaneously. Casualties were mounting: Lieutenant F. F. Corbett-Winder and Second-Lieutenant W. J. Rowley were wounded; "D" Company was without an officer; Lieutenant C. H. Bass was seen to be lying wounded in the open and Corporal Walsh disappeared in a fruitless effort to bring him in. The Germans were creeping round the flank and a retirement became necessary. "A" and "D" Companies (the latter now taken over by Captain R. Y. Sidebottom) withdrew to the cover of a hedge, suffering in so doing. Sidebottom gathered as many men as he could reach with his energetic voice, but fell with many wounds. Privates Bannister and Hanson tried to remove his body, but the enemy were too close, and the former was dangerously wounded. In the meanwhile, Humfrey was carrying back part of the surviving machine gun when he stopped to help a wounded man and fell mortally wounded. Serjeant Roch, who was carrying the tripod of the gun, was hit in the wrist. Both of the only two guns in the battalion were lost that day, and the battalion was without machine guns until nearly the end of September.

Later in the day, after several gallant counter-attacks made by small parties with some success, the whole of this part of the line fell back, by the brigadier's order, across the stream running behind the original position, to a saddle-back ridge running south-west from Haucourt, where the Battalion was rallied by Major Griffin, Captains Woodman and A. H. Spooner (adjutant) and Second-Lieutenant Cross. The latter organized fire upon closely pursuing Germans who fired as they advanced. The withdrawal was helped by the fire of two companies of the Essex. The holding of this new line was assisted by the artillery; but the enemy had pushed ahead all the artillery of their IV Reserve Corps, which joined with that of the Cavalry Corps in heavily shelling this line and the plain behind it as far as Selvigny, to which the bulk of the brigade was ordered to withdraw. The shelling caused some dispersion and mixing with the Inniskilling Fusiliers on the left. Captain J. A. Davenport was wounded in the arm and later taken prisoner, with others, in a temporary hospital in Haucourt. Lieutenant C. E. Stuart went to this building and advised all men able to walk to leave at once, as the enemy were beginning to shell the village. He put Serjeant Whittaker (who had been hit in the head) on a borrowed horse and with others left the village, being picked up later by lorries. In the meanwhile,

various parties of the battalion had been assembling under Major Griffin on the main road leading to Selvigny ; under the orders of the 4th Divisional staff they marched until 10 p.m., when they billeted in some farm buildings at Vendhuille. This march was not made easier by the fact that, whereas officers were well laden with maps of the area east of Mons, there was only one copy in the brigade of the map of the country traversed by the Retreat—and that a hachured, uncontoured and strange French map on a 1 : 80,000 scale.

One party of about 100 men of the battalion, including Lieutenant J. Smyth and Second-Lieutenant J. W. Evatt, lost touch with the remainder and, with detachments of the King's Own, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Royal Dublin Fusiliers and Royal Irish Fusiliers, all under Major R. G. Parker, of the King's Own, held a position on the Ligny–Haucourt road to cover the withdrawal of the troops on the right of the brigade. Some of this party joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in a counter-attack, which was unsuccessful, delivered from near Haucourt towards the ridge to the east of the area originally occupied by the King's Own. After a day of much anxiety and uncertainty, it was found at about 11.30 p.m. that all other troops had disappeared and that the enemy, after one repulse, was closing round on both flanks ; and Major Parker, after consulting the senior officer of each detachment, marshalled his little force and moved off by a country track to Caullery, just south of Ligny. At dawn on 27th August, this party marched through Elincourt, Malincourt, Villers-Outréaux, Vendhuille, Ronssoy, Templeux-le-Guérard and Roisel to Hancourt, where they rejoined the brigade late in the afternoon after a march of about twenty-two miles. The march had not been uneventful ; for strong parties of Germans were seen on the right flank and it was necessary to hide from them. Major Parker said after the war that, though his party had no fighting after leaving Haucourt, the march "was a great trial of physical endurance," but that "the men stuck it splendidly."

The Battle of Le Cateau had been a severe baptism of fire for the 2nd Battalion. Its losses were six officers (Captains R. H. M. Moody, A. C. Ward, D.S.O., and R. Y. Sidebottom ; Lieutenants D. E. Boyle, W. K. Humfrey and C. H. Bass) and an uncertain number of N.C.Os. and men killed ; 3 officers (Captains H. B. Roffey and Lieutenants W. J. Rowley and R. P. A. Helps) and 86 other ranks wounded ; and 6 officers and 402 other ranks missing. Of the latter, 3 officers rejoined a few days later and 143 N.C.Os. and men on 9th September, having in some cases been taken by lorry to French barracks at Compiègne and thence by train to Coulommiers ; many of the remainder, it transpired, were killed where they fought. But the battle had not been in vain. The II Corps was able to break off the action in daylight and retire practically unmolested, after holding up and inflicting such heavy casualties on three German Army Corps that it was many days before the latter came to grips with the

British again. And in this historic action, the Regiment had played an important part.

The Retreat Continued

The 2nd Battalion was at the place opposite which the First-Line Territorials, the 2nd 5th and several of the Service battalions were often to find themselves in 1917 after the retirement of the Germans to the Hindenburg Line. But for the original Expeditionary Force there was as yet no rest, and on 27th August that part of the 2nd Battalion which had been collected at Selvigny marched off from Vendhuille through Lempire to Ronssoy, just south of which it entrenched itself in a temporary rear-guard position on the east of the road down which the 4th Division was retiring. "B" Company (Lieutenant A. J. W. Blencowe), as escort to a battery of artillery, dug itself in under cover of a mist. At 5 a.m. the mist lifted and disclosed a German battery only six hundred yards away. After a spirited duel between the guns, helped by rapid rifle fire from "B" Company, the Germans withdrew and the British guns were got away by horses borrowed from a cavalry regiment, being first man-handled for some distance by men of the company. At 11 a.m. the 12th Brigade, now acting as rear-guard to the 4th Division, marched on through Templeux-le-Guérard and took up another position on a hill about three-quarters of a mile to the south of that village. Later in the day, the battalion marched to Hancourt where it had a rest for a few hours before it tramped on again from 11 p.m. till 11 a.m. on 28th August, when it reached Voyennes. During this march, such was the utter weariness of the troops that by Divisional order the usual hourly halts were left out for fear that once men lay down it would be impossible to rouse them again to continue the march. A few hours later, the battalion moved on to Muirancourt where it bivouacked at about 7 p.m. Before leaving Voyennes, an order was received for all kits to be thrown out of the wagons and for the latter to be used for the carrying of the sick and wounded. One effect of this order was that changes of clothes depended on parcels from home for some time thereafter.

On the following day, 29th August, the battalion moved off at about 11 a.m., crossed the River Oise at Noyon and marched to Carlepont, some four and a half miles south of that town. After a rest of some hours, it marched at about 4 a.m. through Tracy-le-Mont, halted shortly before 9 a.m. in an area where no shade or water was to be found, and at 2 p.m. moved to an outpost position at Berneuil, just north of the River Aisne fourteen miles west of Soissons and eight miles east of Compiègne. At 4.30 p.m. the outposts began to dig in while the remainder of the battalion marched a further two miles to Cuise Lamotte, on the south side of the Aisne, getting in soon after 5 p.m. after one of the longest, hottest and most trying marches which any part of the Regiment was called upon to do during the war. Early the next morning, 31st August, the 12th Brigade marched through the Forest of Compiègne in a westerly

direction, bivouacking at 7 p.m. at Verberie on the main Paris–Compiègne road at the south-western corner of the forest. This day, too, was most trying on account of the heat ; the forest gave but little help as the wide ride down which the battalion marched was dusty, there was no breeze and the long avenue between the trees served only to keep the air still and stifling ; while the hard ruts made in wet weather by timber wagons played havoc with feet, of which some had not yet acclimatized themselves again to Army boots, and few had been removed from the boots at all for nearly a week.

The opening day of September, a month which was to witness one of the decisive crises of the world's history, the Battle of the Marne, and (a week later) a tragic instance of lost chances at the Battle of the Aisne, saw several minor but notable incidents in which the fog of war was a major element. In the Forest of Villers Cotterets the 4th (Guards) Brigade fought a gallant rear-guard action in thick woods. At Néry, "L" Battery earned immortal fame and three Victoria Crosses in its efforts to stave off a surprise attack on the 1st Cavalry Brigade. Néry is only three miles from Verberie and two battalions of the 4th Division were involved in the fighting. The 2nd Battalion took up a position about 9 a.m. to support the 2nd Dragoon Guards near Mont Cornon, but did not come into action, and at 3 p.m. continued its march in a south-south-easterly direction to Baron, where it arrived at 6 p.m. It was not, however, to enjoy a complete night's rest ; for at 2.30 a.m. on 2nd September it marched again through Montagny and Eve to bivouacs a short distance south of Dammartin which was reached at about 1 p.m. A German aeroplane flew over the bivouacs, but at a height which put it out of range of small-arms fire. Once again the night was to be disturbed, the battalion marching at 10.15 p.m. as escort to the Divisional Train and Ammunition Column. Its route lay through St. Mard, Messy, Claye Souilly and Annet to Lagny, which is on the River Marne only thirteen and a half miles due east of the fortifications of the city of Paris and within five miles of the outer defences of the capital. Reaching Lagny at 8.30 a.m., the battalion continued its march to Jossigny, four miles to the south-east of it. Here all units, having lost much of their stores, collected tools of all kinds from neighbouring farms. At Jossigny, the battalion enjoyed a quiet day, interrupted only by a march from 5 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. to bivouacs in Baron de Rothschild's grounds at Ferrières, about five miles to the south-west. And at 3.45 a.m. on 5th September began the last stage of the Retreat from Mons : the battalion marched through Pont Carré to Brie-Comte-Robert, within fourteen miles of the city of Paris on the main road leading south-east from it to the scenes of Napoleon's last battles in 1814 and to Fontainebleau, where he signed his first abdication on 6th April of that year.

So ended the historic Retreat from Mons, a battle honour borne on the King's Colours of the Regiment. The Official Historian, Sir James Edmonds, said of it :

> "The Retreat from Mons . . . was in every way honourable to the Army. The troops suffered under every disadvantage. The number of reservists in the ranks was on an average over one-half of the full strength, and owing to the force of circumstances the units were hurried away to the area of concentration before all ranks could resume acquaintance with their officers and comrades, and relearn their business as soldiers. Arrived there, they were hastened forward by forced marches to battle, confronted with greatly superior numbers of the most renowned army in Europe, and condemned at the very outset to undergo the severest ordeal which can be imposed upon an army. They were short of food and sleep when they began their retreat, they continued it, always short of food and sleep, for thirteen days; and at the end of the retreat they were still an army, and a formidable army. They were never demoralized, for they rightly judged that they had never been beaten."

An extract from a letter written by a young officer of the 2nd Battalion about 2nd September, 1914, will confirm this in the main:

> "I hardly get any time to write as up to date we are on duty all night and march all day. Two hours' 'sleep' a day is our usual portion. . . . The weather has been awfully hot—almost too hot. Food we get in plenty but in uneven quantities sometimes; hardly anything at all sometimes, and then suddenly enough for about four people is hurled at one, and of course one feels bound to try and eat it."

Some idea of the strain imposed upon all ranks, especially the reservists, may be obtained from the following table of marches, based on one issued by 4th Division in 1914 and included in the War Diary of the 2nd Battalion.

Date	*From*	*To*	*Distance*	*Total to Date*
25th Aug.	Bertry	Viesly	5	5
26th Aug.	Viesly	Haucourt	8½	13½
26th Aug.	Haucourt	Vendhuille	12¼	25¾
27th Aug.	Vendhuille	Hancourt	10	35¾
27th Aug.	Hancourt			
28th Aug.		Voyennes	10½	46¼
28th Aug.	Voyennes	Muirancourt	10	56¼
29th Aug.	Muirancourt	Carlepont	12½	68¾
30th Aug.	Carlepont	Cuise Lamotte	9	77¾
31st Aug.	Cuise Lamotte	Verberie	16	93¾
1st Sept.	Verberie	Baron	11½	105¼
2nd Sept.	Baron	Dammartin	9½	114¾
3rd Sept.	Dammartin	Jossigny	17½	132¼
5th Sept.	Jossigny	Brie-Comte-Robert	14	146¼

Total 146¼ miles in 12 days. Average over 12 miles a day.

CHAPTER III

THE MARNE AND THE AISNE

"MARNE, 1914," "AISNE, 1914"

(Map 2)

2nd Battalion

FEW battles in history have given rise to such furious controversy or to so many legends as the events commonly called the Battle of the Marne. Fortunately, this chronicle is not concerned with the matters of strategy involved. It will suffice to say that von Kluck's First German Army had in the early days of September, 1914, abandoned the original plan of encircling Paris round the west in order to drive the British and French armies into a vast repetition of Sedan against the Vosges and the Swiss frontier, and had marched to the south-east across the eastern face of the defences of the capital, behind which General Joffre had begun to form a new Sixth Army under General Maunoury for a counter-stroke ; that General Joffre or General Galliéni, the Military Governor of Paris, had seen the chance thus given by the enemy in exposing his flank ; that General Maunoury's Army, part of it rushed forward in the now famous taxi-cabs of Paris (driven as furiously and wildly as they always are), had been hurled against von Kluck's right flank, compelling his speedy retirement to avoid being himself encircled as he had hoped to encircle the Allied left ; that the neighbouring German Armies on his left were thereby forced to conform and to withdraw in their turn ; and that the British and the French left ceased on 5th September to march to the south and south-west away from the enemy, and on the 6th turned north and north-east to follow him—but alas ! as the event proved, not quickly or vigorously enough to keep him moving.

It is of interest to recall in passing that the discovery of von Kluck's change of direction was very largely due to British aerial reconnaissances, of which a full share was performed by Captain (afterwards Air Commodore) L. E. O. Charlton, who had been seconded from the Regiment to the Royal Flying Corps in 1912.

The entry in the 2nd Battalion's War Diary for 5th September ends with the words "End of retirement" ; and it was with a proud feeling of relief that the troops turned back on their tracks on the 6th. But the marches of the next week were to be as long as those of the Retreat and would have been as trying but for the longer rests and the "tails up" spirit which now helped the troops. The weather

2ND BN.

became perverse and many are the mentions of drenching rain during the advance which ended with stiff fighting on the north bank of the River Aisne.

At 1.30 a.m. on 6th September, the 2nd Battalion, which had by then received some Section "D" reservists, marched through Pont Carré to bivouacs just north of Serris, near which a few shots were fired at them, only to move on again in the early afternoon to Villiers, where it was in support to the 12th Brigade watching the valley of the Grand Morin. The advance on the 7th was in a more easterly direction and lay through Sancy to La Haute Maison. The shelling, fortunately harmless, of the battalion and the discovery by patrols of the Essex Regiment of enemy in a wood near Pierre Levée were indications that fighting was soon to be expected. The next day, the 8th, passed uneventfully, however, though it was at first expected that an attack would be necessary to clear the enemy found by the Essex Regiment and the battalion deployed in readiness. In the event, the 12th Brigade marched at 10 a.m. to Jouarre as advanced guard to the 4th Division, being ordered in the afternoon to move to Courcelles to clear the enemy out of that hamlet. The battalion, however, had no serious fighting and bivouacked with the rest of the Brigade on the road at L'Hotel de Bois, a short distance west of Courcelles.

The Crossing of the Marne

Though the various accounts are not as conflicting as in the case of the Battle of Le Cateau, it has not been easy to arrive at the exact way in which the 2nd Battalion was employed on 9th September, 1914, or the precise routes by which it crossed the River Marne on that day. But it is clear that at 6 a.m. the 12th Brigade advanced across the Petit Morin river in order to seize the high ground in the loop of the Marne north-east of La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, so that artillery could be brought up to deal with the enemy defences of that town. The battalion appears then to have been divided into two parts.

One, after consultation with Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. Biddulph, commanding 1st Rifle Brigade, moved down a winding ride through a wood at the bottom of which lay the Marne, at this point a deep, swift-running stream about eighty yards wide, and began to cross it at about 10 a.m., going in single file over a footbridge across a weir and some lock gates east-south-east of Chamigny. The crossing was covered by the machine guns of 2nd Essex Regiment and the rifle fire of "A" Company. The half-dozen Germans who were watching the crossing were disconcerted by the sudden fire from several angles and fled. It took some time to negotiate the very narrow means of passage ; but eventually this part of the battalion pushed forward up the rise towards the village of Chamigny and established itself during the late evening on the Chamigny–La Ferté road. From battalion headquarters could be seen the exciting drama of isolated Uhlans riding along the road and the British slowly

climbing up towards them, each side ignorant of the other's presence. Finally the Fusiliers were high enough to spot them and fire. A platoon, commanded by Serjeant W. W. Ganly, concealed itself in a wood close to the road and, by withholding its fire till the last moment, severely punished a party of 12 Uhlans riding along it, 1 being killed, 3 wounded and 6 taken prisoner. One of the latter, on being brought to battalion headquarters for searching, presented himself with the words, "Well, sir, thank God this ——— war's over" : he turned out to have been a London bus driver. Unfortunately, "A" Company, advancing up to the top of the ridge at dusk, were reported to a battery as being Germans retiring off it ; and two of the company were wounded and one of the prisoners killed.

In the meanwhile, the rest of the battalion and the transport had moved up the eastern side of the spur running north between Luzancy and Chamigny in the loop of the river previously mentioned, and crossed the Marne by the railway viaduct which carries the main line from Paris to Château-Thierry, Châlons-sur-Marne and southern Germany. It was no easy task to get the horses and vehicles over a bridge which was not designed for road traffic.

Eventually at the end of the day the whole battalion was reunited north of Chamigny shortly after dusk and bivouacked with outposts for the night. The next day, 10th September, the battalion stayed in its position till midday in order to cover the crossing of the remainder of the Division over the Marne. In the afternoon it marched without incident through Dhuisy and Coulombs to Vaux, where the 12th Brigade found the outposts for the 4th Division. On 11th September, the march was continued through Mareuil-sur-Ourcq, St. Quentin and Noroy to Chouy. On the 12th, the battalion had a tiring day, in heavy rain and with no rations, escorting a heavy battery and helping to haul its guns up hills ; it eventually arrived at 11 p.m. at a farm about a mile south of Septmonts, which lies within three miles of the River Aisne.

The Battle of the Aisne

It is now widely recognized that, if the remainder of the British Expeditionary Force had acted on 13th September, 1914, as vigorously and with the same enterprise as did the 4th Division and its units, the result of the Battle of the Aisne might have been much more satisfactory and the whole history of the war drastically changed to our advantage. At all events, the left of the British line, which included the 2nd Battalion, had no cause for remorse, but very much the reverse, in its actions on that day.

Just east of Soissons, the River Aisne is unfordable and between sixty and seventy yards wide and flows peacefully from side to side of a flat, very open valley varying in width from one mile to nearly two miles. The sides of the valley rise steeply and are much broken up with spurs running towards the river, but with this important difference between them : that whereas the heights on the northern side are heavily wooded and provided the Germans with good

opportunities for observation and concealed positions for artillery, those of the south are less steep, more open and so shaped that it was very difficult for our artillery to find positions from which to support the infantry without exposing themselves to superior German artillery fire.

During the night of 12th 13th September, Brigadier-General A. Hunter-Weston, then commanding 11th Infantry Brigade and soon to be the Divisional Commander of the 1st Battalion at Gallipoli, was ordered to push forward and seize a crossing over the Aisne at Venizel bridge, three miles east-south-east of Soissons. The bridge had been partially destroyed by the Germans ; but General Hunter-Weston, a Sapper himself, decided that there was enough of the roadway left to enable infantry to cross in single file, though all ammunition and other transport loads would have to be passed over by hand and carried thence on the man till a stronger bridge was available. Accordingly, between 1 and 3 a.m. on 13th September, the 11th Brigade crossed the river, pushed rapidly forward, surprised the German outposts on the crest two miles north of the river and established themselves on a line running westward from Ste. Marguerite. At 5.30 a.m., the 12th Brigade left Septmonts and moved through Billy-sur-Aisne to Venizel, where it halted. The enemy began to search the village with heavy guns, using shells nick-named "coal-boxes," one shell landing in the middle of a company of the King's Own about twenty yards from the battalion on the other side of a road, causing half a dozen casualties. This was the battalion's first experience of heavy shells. As other shells came uncomfortably near, the battalion and the 2nd Essex Regiment were moved forward. "A" Company (Captain Woodman) was ordered by a staff officer, who did not inform Major Griffin, to cross the river. It did so by Venizel bridge and, having no orders what to do on reaching the northern bank, went into a small wood near the far end of the bridge. The rest of the battalion followed and became a more or less confused crowd in the wood. As the effect would have been disastrous if the German guns had chanced to open fire on such a tempting target, Major Griffin sought the permission of Colonel F. G. Anley, who was temporarily in command of the 12th Infantry Brigade, to move the battalion elsewhere. He was ordered to advance towards Bucy-le-Long and accordingly collected parties of men, put the nearest officer in command of each, and dispatched them in extended order towards the objective. A succession of skirmishing lines was thus formed to the right and left of the road running northwards to Bucy-le-Long, the leading wave being commanded by Second-Lieutenant G. F. Page. The lines moved forward across the open valley under a heavy fire of shells from the heights to the north-west and about Chivres. How this advance appeared to the enemy is graphically told by the German author Walter Bloem, who saw it as a captain of the 12th Brandenburg Grenadiers from Chivres spur, in his book "Vormarsch" (translated into English as "The Advance from Mons, 1914") :

> "Stretched out across the broad expanse of meadows between us and the river was a long line of dots wide apart, and looking through glasses one saw that these dots were infantry advancing, widely extended: English infantry, too, unmistakably. A field battery on our left had spotted them, and we watched their shrapnel bursting over the advancing line. Soon a second line of dots emerged from the willows along the river bank, at least ten paces apart, and began to advance. More of our batteries came into action; but it was noticed that a shell, however well aimed, seldom killed more than one man, the lines being so well and widely extended. The front line had taken cover when the shelling began, running behind any hedges or buildings near by, but this second line kept steadily on, while a third and fourth line now appeared from the river bank, each keeping about two hundred yards distance from the line in front. Our guns now fired like mad, but it did not stop the movement: a fifth and sixth line came on, all with the same wide intervals between and the same distance apart. It was magnificently done. . . . We watched the tactical excellence of this attack with such interest that we had forgotten that we were . . . damnably exposed."

Captain Bloem was right about the casualties, the battalion losing only one killed and two wounded during this stage of the battle, and about the extensions as the leading platoon was at exactly ten paces interval.

At about 1 p.m., the battalion reached Bucy-le-Long, where it re-formed into its proper platoons and companies, turned eastward and marched without incident to Ste. Marguerite as advanced guard to the 12th Brigade. Shortly after 3 p.m., Colonel Anley decided to attack the high ground east of Chivres from which troublesome rifle fire was coming. The 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers were to lead, with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in support, covered by the machine guns of the 2nd Essex Regiment from a position on the high ground north-east of Ste. Marguerite. (It must be remembered that the battalion had lost at Le Cateau the only two machine guns then held by a British infantry battalion.) It was not realized that what confronted them was an enemy well entrenched in carefully chosen positions and, as an officer of the battalion wrote shortly after:

> "On reflection, it is somewhat astonishing, after our experience of trench warfare, to think of a very weak battalion advancing over the open to attack German trenches, without artillery preparation of any sort, but it was done by a weak battalion of well-trained soldiers, with high traditions behind them."

The battalion moved through the back gardens of the houses of Ste. Marguerite and then entered the wood east of the village. The undergrowth in it was very thick and the ground swampy, so that

progress was slow. After the battalion had advanced about three-quarters of a mile, the Germans became aware of its presence and opened fire. As it was getting late and the wood was becoming almost impenetrable, Major Griffin decided to deploy in the open. "A" (Woodman) and "D" (Fulton) Companies went to the left, while "C" (Blencowe) and "B" (Evatt) Companies held the right edge of the wood facing the German trenches. A party of "B" Company, under Second-Lieutenant J. S. Paulson, tried to charge the enemy lines across a turnip field, but was stopped by rifle and machine-gun fire from entrenched positions south of Chivres village and from the western slopes of Chivres spur, and had to rush to cover behind a bank. All but three men were hit. Paulson was severely wounded and, although he was gallantly brought in by Company-Quarter-master-Serjeant Martin and Company-Serjeant-Major (later Captain) C. Gregory, died that night. In the meanwhile, "A" and "D" Companies had come under heavy fire as soon as they emerged from the wood, but in spite of casualties pressed on till they reached the cover of a bank some two hundred yards further on, beyond which it was impossible to move. Lieutenant C. E. Stuart with a few men made an attempt, but he was killed and they were also knocked out. At about this time, the Commanding Officer, Major C. J. Griffin, was wounded in the hand by a machine-gun bullet while on a visit to "A" Company's position; and on moving away to visit Evatt and Blencowe he was caught in the leg by a sniper and forced to abandon his intention. During the afternoon Lieutenant J. S. Fulton and Second-Lieutenant J. W. Evatt were also wounded, the latter being trampled on as he lay in the open by a party of Germans who moved forward a short distance from their lines at about dusk but fortunately did not notice him.

In spite of fire from within the battalion, of the sending of a company of Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in support, and of rifle and machine-gun fire from the 2nd Essex Regiment, the battalion could make no further advance. It succeeded, however, in maintaining its position although losses continued. As the battalion's War Diary proudly noted, it was some consolation to think that, three weeks later when the British Expeditionary Force left the Aisne, no troops had got so far forward as the 2nd Battalion did that evening; a view which is endorsed by the Official Historian, who says, "It was long before any troops of the Allies approached nearer than the Lancashire men had to the commanding promontory of Chivres." The cost had been 2 officers and 14 other ranks killed or died of wounds, 3 officers and 53 other ranks wounded and 1 officer (Second-Lieutenant G. F. Page) and 83 other ranks missing, of whom the officer and 71 other ranks rejoined within a few days.

The battalion was relieved after dark by the 2nd Manchester Regiment of the 5th Division. Naturally, as the result of moving through woods and fighting for some hours, a good deal of confusion had occurred and parties became separated from their own companies and even from their battalion. As is shown by the figures of missing,

some men could not rejoin for a day or two after the battle. One such party was caught in the open shortly before dusk on 13th and had to "lie doggo" till darkness made movement possible. It then moved cautiously towards the south-west as being the most likely direction in which to find British troops. After a while it heard sounds near by and held a consultation as to what to do : if they called out and the sounds were made by Germans, all would be up with them ; if they moved nearer without disclosing themselves and it was the English who were at hand—well, sentries have been known to shoot first and ask questions afterwards. So everybody listened yet more intently. First they heard a clinking which seemed like that made by the "brasses" of British web equipment ; so they crept a little nearer. Then was heard muffled talking which sounded like English. At last came certainty. A husky and very angry voice called out "Eh ! Let oop !" "What's t' —— fuss ?" asked another voice. "Enough —— fuss," answered the first. "Tek thy —— boot out on my —— earhole."

On the following day, the 14th, the battalion was in reserve, occupied in digging while the remainder of the 12th Brigade hung on to its positions astride Ste. Marguerite and the 14th Brigade made a new but unsuccessful attack on Chivres. The village church of Ste. Marguerite was used as the regimental aid post, the pews being covered with clean straw and blankets and used as beds. On the 15th, "C" Company was moved up nearer the Essex lines and dug in there. On this day Lieutenant-Colonel (afterwards Lieutenant-General Sir) R. H. K. Butler, who as stated in Chapter I had been promoted from the Dorsetshire Regiment in June, 1914, but had been temporarily retained in an important staff appointment, arrived and assumed command of the battalion. He was still convalescent from a severe operation made necessary by a wound, the daily dressing of which was a particularly painful proceeding and continued to be required for several weeks. In spite of this, he showed great fortitude and inspired all ranks by his example and his soldierly qualities. Shortly after, the battalion was joined by Lieutenant W. Tyrrell, Royal Army Medical Corps (afterwards Air Vice-Marshal Sir W. Tyrrell, K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., Royal Air Force Medical Services), who soon endeared himself to everybody as medical officer and was later to distinguish himself on many occasions.

The days which followed provided little of moment, except that on the 22nd two machine guns were received to replace those lost a month before. The battalion moved from Ste. Marguerite to Missy-sur-Aisne, digging and being shelled every day, and spent a period of routine till 7th October, when it was relieved by French troops and marched to Ciry and Sermoise, south of the Aisne, in relief of the 2nd Durham Light Infantry. Here again, on the 8th, the battalion was relieved by French troops, for the British Expeditionary Force was in process of being withdrawn from the Aisne in order that, for reasons political and administrative as much as strategical, it might be sent to Flanders. The 9th and 10th were spent at Chacrise, route marching

and "skirmishing," and on 11th October the brigade moved in French lorries to Le Meux, a small station about thirty-five miles away on the western side of the Forest of Compiègne, on the main Paris–Brussels railway. The medical officer considered that the jolting transmitted to the battalion's livers by this journey proved a useful antidote to the spell of somewhat inactive trench warfare which it had just undergone. The transport had been sent by road on 9th October ; and at 5 a.m. on 12th October, the battalion entrained for the north, the men in the uncomfortable wagons ("40 Hommes, 8 Chevaux") usual on French railways, the officers in windowless and aged passenger coaches, to the accompaniment of a great variety of rumours as to their destination—Russia, Antwerp, the Belgian Coast, back to England, and India or the Near East.

FRANCE AND FLAN
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6
B
C
G
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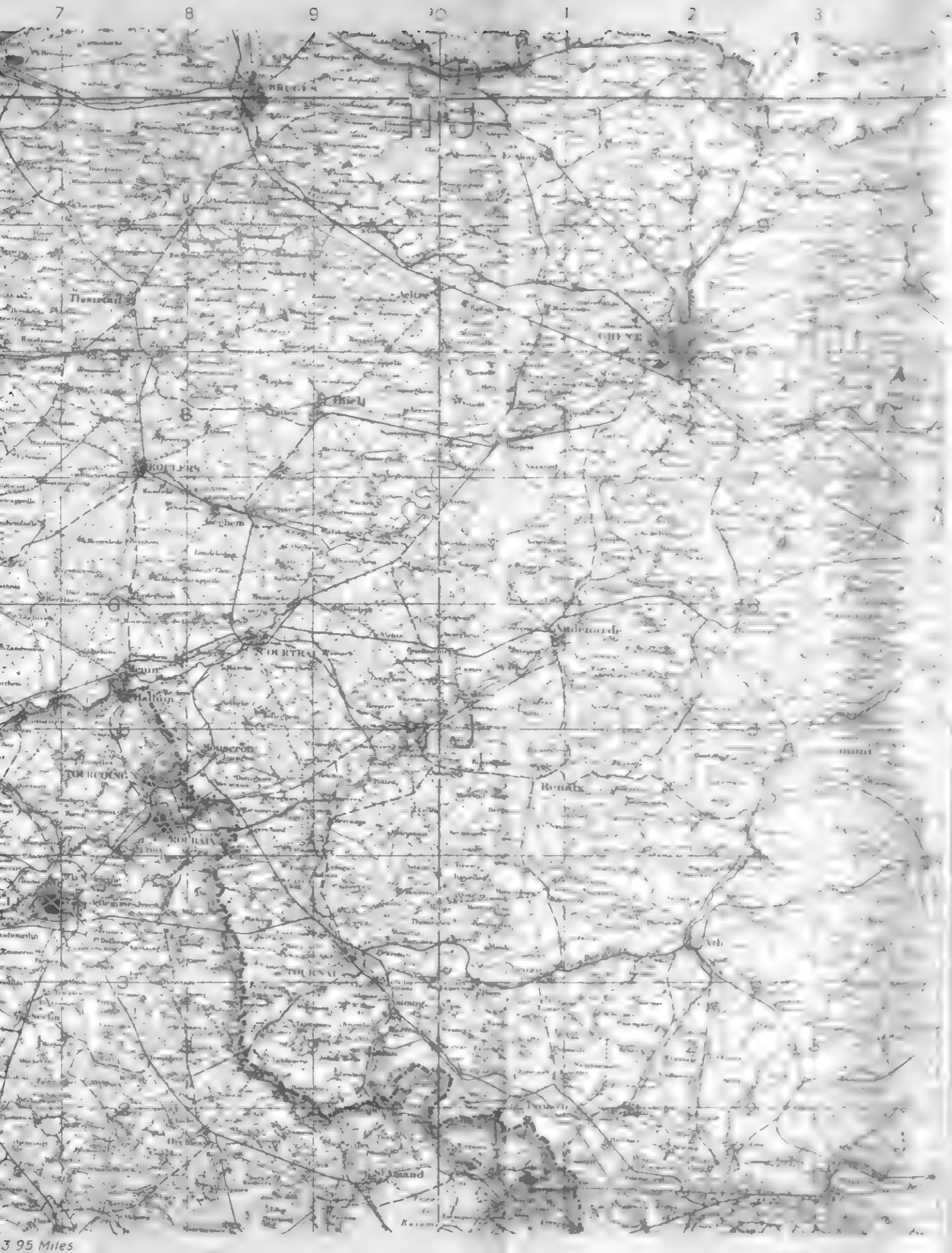
Nieuport
Dunkerque
Bergues
Wormhoudt
Poperinghe
Aprek
Hazebrouck
Merville
Lillers
Bethune
Lens
Scale 1 Inch to
Miles 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

DERS (NORTHERN)

MAP No. 3



CHAPTER IV

ARMENTIÈRES—TRENCH WARFARE—2nd YPRES

"ARMENTIÈRES, 1914," "YPRES, 1915," "ST. JULIEN," "BELLEWAARDE"

(Maps 3 and 4)

2nd Battalion

THE 2nd Battalion detrained at Hazebrouck at 3 a.m. on 13th October, 1914, and went into billets. At about 10 a.m., however, it was on the move again, in a north-easterly direction through Borre. On reaching Rouge Croix, the battalion received orders to support the King's Own in capturing Meteren, a picturesque village perched on the top of a small hill whose slopes are gradual and very open. The attack was timed to begin at 1.30 p.m. in conjunction with the 6th Division on the right and with 2nd Essex on the left. Keeping touch was difficult, as the day was wet and misty. By 3.30 p.m. the King's Own had been held up, the German position (held by a Bavarian infantry regiment and part of the 3rd Cavalry Division) being strong and well protected by machine guns in the outlying houses of the village. At 5.20 p.m. the 2nd Battalion began to work round the south of Meteren, past the right of the King's Own, being helped by artillery fire which succeeded in quietening the enemy's fire somewhat, and by dusk it had established itself close to the enemy front line. The brigadier then decided that any further day attack on the village would be too costly and ordered the battalion to capture it that night. Lieutenant-Colonel Butler held a conference of officers in the kitchen of a farm-house, where by candle light, with the windows well blanketed and with maps spread on tables and chairs, they heard his plan of attack. As the fields were divided off by wire fences and movement across country was considered to be too difficult in the darkness, the advance was to be made along three narrow roads converging on the village, one company being allotted to each road. The fourth, with battalion headquarters, was to follow on the centre road, leading to the church whose tower (it was hoped) would act as guide. 2ND BN.

Bayonets were fixed and the battalion moved forward in dead silence. As the village loomed nearer, the strain became great ; for none knew what the strength of the enemy might be or how soon hell might be let loose by an alarmed garrison. The village square was, however, reached without incident and there lights were seen in a house. Colonel Butler ordered its door to be broken open, whereupon three Germans were pulled out. Put against a wall for

safe custody, they made up their minds that they were to be shot out of hand and displayed great terror. This heartened the troops, who set off to comb the village with great zest, "A" Company to the eastern edge which it was to hold, "B" to the southern edge and a third to the high ground to the north, a platoon from each being detailed to search the houses in its area. As an officer put it, it was "rather like ratting, only more exciting." In all about a dozen prisoners were taken, the main garrison having withdrawn at about 11 p.m. At 12.15 a.m. on 14th October, the battalion was able to report that Meteren was in its hands, and two sections of Royal Engineers were sent up to help in putting the place in a state of defence. The total casualties for the day had been Second-Lieutenant E. C. Mercer and 2 men killed and 7 men wounded. Serjeant H. Duckers was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for the excellent handling of his platoon on this occasion and for consistently good work in various engagements.

At about 3 p.m. on 14th October, the brigade marched in pouring rain to billets just east of Bailleul, which it reached, after a long delay on the road, at about 5 p.m. A rest of twenty-four hours followed and the brigade marched at 8 p.m. on the 15th to bivouacs on the main Bailleul-Armentières road near Le Leuthe (and within a few hundred yards of the Franco-Belgian frontier), whence the battalion moved on the morning of 16th October to a position on the Warnave stream between Nieppe and Ploegsteert, which it entrenched. Early on 17th October Lieutenant-Colonel Butler sent out a patrol under Second-Lieutenant J. W. Evatt, which reported that the enemy were clear of Le Bizet but were holding Le Touquet. At dusk that evening, the battalion formed up at the cross-roads a mile south of Ploegsteert and, after Lieutenant-Colonel Butler had personally marked the site of trenches to be dug between the Ploegsteert–Le Bizet road and Le Touquet and roughly parallel with the railway which lies to the north-west of the latter place, the battalion spent a busy night at work with such tools as could be collected from neighbouring farms.

The Attack on Le Touquet

It was the intention on 18th October that the enemy should be cleared from both banks of the River Lys near Armentières and from a dominating ridge to the east and south-east of that town, as a preliminary to moving down the Lys towards Menin. A salient in the German line had its point at Frélinghien and it was the task of the 12th Brigade to attack the western side of it, the 10th Brigade being on its right. The attacking troops of the former were to be the King's Own on the right with the trenches between the river and Le Touquet as its objective, and the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers on the left with the village itself as its objective, both units being under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. K. Butler, who used as his staff officer his adjutant, Captain A. H. Spooner. The command of 2nd Battalion devolved on Captain J. E. S. Woodman, who detailed

the battalion scout officer, Second-Lieutenant J. W. Evatt, to act as his adjutant.

Early in the morning ,"B" (Captain W. Higgin-Birkett) and "C" (Captain R. Luker) Companies advanced on the left of the Le Bizet–Le Touquet road, with "A" Company in support and "D" Company in reserve. The village was strongly held, the houses were loopholed and trenches were dotted about over the open ground outside the village. Moreover the enemy was able to bring a cross fire of artillery and rifles from the east bank of the River Lys and from the loopholed buildings of Frélinghien. As a result, progress was very slow, "B" and "C" Companies lost touch and a platoon of "A" Company under Second-Lieutenant L. B. L. Seckham, with Serjeant W. Evans, was sent up to restore contact. But the enemy fire was so heavy that it was found necessary to reinforce this platoon by Lieutenant J. K. C. Cross's platoon of "D" Company, which moved across country under heavy fire. Though Cross himself was hit in the head by a piece of shrapnel he rushed forward another thirty yards, but was then obliged to drop out. While his wound was being bound up behind a haystack by Seckham, a German shell carried away the top of the stack.

By 10 a.m. the battalion had crossed the railway and was approaching the outskirts of Le Touquet, but by 10.30 a.m. its advance was definitely held up by shrapnel which appeared to be fired from the direction of Frélinghien at point-blank range. Shortly after, Woodman sent Evatt along the railway line to O.C. "B" Company with an order that he must get his company on to the Le Touquet–Le Gheer road, clear the former village at all costs at the point of the bayonet and if possible push on to Frélinghien. This proved to be impossible, although gallant and valuable work was done by a machine gun manned by Serjeant E. M. Parkinson and Privates H. Pulford, J. Lynn and Yates. The first two were unfortunately killed by two consecutive shots two days later. When O.C. "B" Company represented his inability to advance in view of the lack of artillery support, Evatt was sent to him with an intimation from Woodman that there was no such word as "can't" in the army ! Nevertheless no further move was in fact feasible, and at 12.35 p.m. orders were issued by 12th Brigade for a systematic bombardment of Frélinghien to be carried out and for the attack to be resumed at 2.30 p.m. This time, the Le Touquet–Le Gheer road was reached and "B" Company established itself precariously on a line just north of the level crossing. Enemy shelling was by now heavy, particularly on the crossing ; and six men who were sheltering under a culvert close to it were killed by the concussion of a bursting shell. At about 5 p.m. the battalion received orders not to press its attack unless further progress was made by the 10th Brigade which had been held up on the right. Some slight advance was, however, possible and by dusk the battalion had secured a firm grasp of the whole village of Le Touquet with the exception of a few houses at the road junction, which were at first occupied but had to be abandoned as they were

set on fire by enemy shells, the flames lighting up the countryside all round. Fortunately, however, little damage was done to the troops.

During the night, Lieutenant-Colonel Butler sent up a party of Royal Engineers who built a strong barricade across the village street. The battalion spent the night digging a trench line which eventually became the second line and remained intact until the unit moved north in April, 1915. "B" Company was on the left, with "D" echeloned to its right rear and "A" in reserve. Battalion headquarters were established in a farm which was later known as Pakenham Farm, Lieutenant-Colonel Butler's headquarters being in the Estaminet de la Gare for the night and the regimental aid post in the waiting-room of Le Touquet station.

The 19th was a day of fine weather and was devoted to improving trenches with the help of tools requisitioned from local tobacco planters. Thirty-five sets of wire-cutters bought by the Staff Captain, Captain O. H. North, in Armentières, were also issued to the battalion at its request for this work. Early in the day Woodman sent Evatt, who was accompanied by a signaller, Private Earnshaw, to find out whether there were any signs of the enemy near Frélinghien bridge and whether the Germans had placed a barricade across the road near it. Being unable to see the bridge from the ground, Evatt climbed into a willow tree and had just time to see a barricade of carts at the further end of the bridge when a shrapnel shell burst near by, followed soon after by two more from behind Frélinghien. Judging that they had been seen, the investigators thereupon dropped into a ditch and hurried back along it. They were not further troubled, but deemed it advisable to sprint at their top speed across an open space which lay between the end of the ditch and Pakenham Farm. Woodman commented on their lack of breath and did not seem to think that the haste had been necessary. But the German gunners, having tracked the scouts to their lair, sent some rather heavy shells on to the farm, riddling its gate and taking most of the slates off the roof. This left Woodman quite unmoved in his overdue reading of *The Times* until a high explosive shell burst in the middle of the farm-yard, causing the complete disappearance of a large churn, when at last he consented to join the rest of battalion headquarters in the cellar, which was dark and chilly but certainly safer and moreover usefully stocked with bacon and buttermilk. The artillery dealt with the vindictive enemy with sufficient effect to secure that the rest of the day was quiet.

The German Counter-Attack

Patrols sent out by the battalion during the night of the 19th/20th October discovered that the Germans had put up a fresh barricade and had reinforced their troops on the west bank of the Lys. During the morning of 20th October an attack was made against the troops on the left of the battalion which partially succeeded; and by 1 p.m. a report had to be sent to brigade headquarters to the effect that the battalion's left flank was being turned. One company of the Essex

Regiment and a squadron of the 19th Hussars were sent up as reinforcements and by 6 p.m. the situation had been restored without the battalion being seriously involved, though Captain S. Lucas-Tooth, commanding "D" Company, was killed by a sniper at 9.15 a.m.

At 5.15 a.m. on 21st October, however, heavy shelling fell on the battalion's position, followed by an infantry attack on the Inniskilling Fusiliers, who were compelled to give ground, thereby exposing the left company of the King's Own which had been sent to that flank the night before and which in its turn had to make a short retirement. All efforts of the enemy to force the King's Own to a further withdrawal failed. But a gap had occurred between "B" Company of the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers and the King's Own which it was imperative to fill. Lieutenant R. Northover and three platoons of the battalion were accordingly sent, and later Second-Lieutenant L. B. L. Seckham and his platoon were withdrawn from the right and sent to fill the remaining gap. The stalwart defence of the front-line companies, backed by powerful artillery fire, finally broke the attack. The battalion machine-gun section also played its part. One gun was established on the level crossing to the north of Le Touquet village so as to shoot on both sides of the railway. Unfortunately, with the object of "firing round the left side of cover" as laid down in the training manual, it was placed alongside a white post which proved a very good aiming mark for the enemy, with the result that the team had to retire quickly, though not before two men had been killed and one slightly wounded. The gun was brought out by Private J. Lynn (soon to win the battalion's first Victoria Cross) and Private Grundy and taken to Le Touquet station, being later used on the right flank. The second gun under Serjeant Randall was then ordered to take up the position vacated by the first gun. This proved to be impossible, but it was got into action on the railway line half-way between the level crossing and the station, a spot which became a permanent machine-gun emplacement during the winter. Shortly after, however, this gun jammed and it was then discovered that the spare parts had not been brought back with the first gun. Lynn went to the original position to get them; and he brought them back together with four belt boxes and two rifles, through heavy fire, quite unperturbed and unhurried. Eventually the Germans began to retire, and to quote the battalion War Diary, "our machine guns had the time of their lives," inflicting heavy casualties. It was estimated that several hundred German dead were lying in front of the battalion lines. During the ensuing night, other battalions of the Division ejected the last remaining intruders.

The casualties during the five days of fighting had been 1 officer (Captain S. Lucas-Tooth) and 29 other ranks killed, 4 officers and 65 other ranks wounded; and 7 other ranks missing. On the 21st, "B" Company lost 32 men in a quarter of an hour. On this day, too, Second-Lieutenant G. G. Bowen was wounded while very gallantly bringing a wounded man into a trench. Captain J. E. S. Woodman was

awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his good work during the attack on Le Touquet and the defence of it. This gallant, imperturbable and universally respected officer was killed at the Battle of Loos in September, 1915, while second-in-command of the 12th Northumberland Fusiliers. The part played by the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers in dealing with the German counter-attacks near Le Touquet on 20th and 21st October, 1914, earned them a striking tribute in a letter addressed by Brigadier-General H. F. M. Wilson, commanding the 4th Division, to the Headquarters of the III Army Corps, on 23rd October, 1914 :—

> "The staunchness of the King's Own and Lancashire Fusiliers after their flank was turned was most commendable, and I beg to bring to notice Lieutenant-Colonel Butler, Lancashire Fusiliers, who commanded these two Battalions with great success during these two days . . ."

On 22nd October, after a morning of harassing machine-gun fire which fell chiefly on the trenches of "C" Company, the battalion was relieved early in the afternoon by "C" Company of the 1st Rifle Brigade and went into billets at Le Bizet. In the evening of the 23rd, the 12th Brigade took over a sector of trenches at Rue du Bois near Chapelle d'Armentières, south-east of the town of that name, the battalion relieving the 2nd Leinster Regiment and the 1st North Staffordshire Regiment. Shortly after the relief, the enemy delivered a heavy attack on the units farther to the south, but the battalion was not seriously involved. The 25th was a quiet day ; and on the 26th the battalion was relieved at 1 a.m. by the King's Own and arrived in billets in a brewery at Armentières at 4 a.m. On the 27th, two companies occupied reserve trenches in the morning in order to support the 18th Brigade, which had been attacked at 5 a.m., and the whole battalion relieved the King's Own at night.

Again, scarcely had the relief been completed when, at 2 a.m. on the 28th, the enemy attacked the 2nd Essex Regiment on the right of the battalion, which went to its support and helped to repel the assault. A second attack was made on the 1st East Yorkshire Regiment of the 15th Brigade, but it was held up in the wire between the first and second lines of trenches and was driven back by a counter-attack launched by the East Yorkshire Regiment and "B" Company of the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers. The enemy's losses were estimated to be at least 200 killed. The battalion's losses during the day were 4 men killed and Captain W. Higgin-Birkett and 7 men wounded. Higgin-Birkett had been hit in the head and started to walk back to the dressing station alone ; nothing was ever heard of him again.

The next day was quiet and at night the battalion was relieved by the King's Own and went into billets at Armentières, where it also spent most of 30th October. But the battle was not yet over, for at 11 p.m. on that day two companies were sent under Captain Woodman to Ploegsteert to help the 11th Infantry Brigade, which

had been hard pressed all day, the remainder of the battalion moving up at 1 a.m. on 31st October. On 1st November, two companies were sent forward under Woodman to the Messines road in local support of the 1st Somerset Light Infantry, the remainder of the battalion being in brigade reserve at Ploegsteert. Once again Lieutenant-Colonel Butler was called upon to take control of more than his own battalion. He fixed his headquarters at a small house on the Ploegsteert Messines road, near a spot which was later known as "Hyde Park Corner." It soon became a rallying point for the remnants of various hard-hit units. Officers of several other battalions would arrive and report themselves and their strength to Colonel Butler. He made a note of what they told him, and, after a careful scrutiny of his map, allotted to each party a place where it would be useful in filling the gaps in the front line. He dictated his orders to a group of officers, which included his adjutant (Spooner) his medical officer (Tyrrell), Major Griffin, and Captain (afterwards Lieutenant-General Sir Hugh) Elles, each of whom took several copies by means of carbon paper, so that every detachment commander had written confirmation of his instructions. The calmness and method with which Colonel Butler appreciated the situation and dealt with it had a very encouraging effect on the tired officers and men who witnessed his actions. On the following day the whole battalion was in trenches at St. Yves and was heavily shelled, Captain T. H. Sneyd and 4 other ranks being killed and 19 other ranks wounded. One of those killed was Serjeant W. Muddle, an old Duke of York's School boy, a football player of the 4th and 2nd Battalions and a skilled musician; he was hit as he was reading a letter ordering him to return to England on promotion to Bandmaster.

The 2nd November, 1914, is the date officially fixed as the end of the Battle of Armentières, the title given to all the fighting near that place in October and awarded to the Regiment as one of the battle honours shown in the Army List.

The Winter of 1914—1915

From 3rd November, 1914, till the end of April, 1915, the lot of the 2nd Battalion was "the daily round, the common task," endured under conditions of cold, wet and inferiority of weapons, ammunition and trench stores which would have ruined the morale of any troops who did not possess a sound training and a strong *esprit de corps*, backed as it was in the case of the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers not only by pride in the deeds of their forerunners of Minden and Inkerman but by the confidence in themselves and in their skill-at-arms to which their own actions in the autumn of 1914 had fully entitled them. It would be tedious—and there is not the space—to rehearse all the moves of the battalion into and out of trenches and billets during this period; they are to be found in detail in Chapter IV of Volume II; and it must suffice to mention some of the outstanding events and for the rest to say that trenches were at various times held at St. Yves, in front of Ploegsteert Wood,

and more continuously at Le Touquet while the billets were at Armentières, Le Bizet, and once (in November) at Nieppe. But rarely did a day pass without the War Diary having to record a number of men killed or wounded.

On 7th November, while the battalion was resting in dug-outs in Ploegsteert Wood, a company had to be sent to take part in a counter-attack made also by two companies of the 3rd Worcestershire Regiment and a company of the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers against a large body of Germans which had broken through the front of the Worcestershire Regiment in the wood. They succeeded in stopping all further attempts to advance, but were not able to recover any of the lost ground. The Worcestershire were again the victims of an attack on the night of the 9th/10th November, and the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers were ordered to support the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in a night counter-attack. The latter battalion became separated in the darkness and missed one trench occupied by the enemy, which was dealt with by the Lancashire Fusiliers, who also seized a farm, bayoneting the occupants of trench and farm. The positions thus taken were, however, enfiladed by the enemy and had to be abandoned and others used to watch him and prevent further progress into the wood. The casualties in this night attack were 2 men killed, and Lieutenant R. Northover and 15 other ranks wounded.

Four events of a personal nature next call for mention. On 21st November, Lieutenant-Colonel Butler took over temporary command of 12th Infantry Brigade during the absence on leave of Colonel F. G. Anley. On the 28th he left the battalion on promotion to command the 3rd Infantry Brigade, the command of the 12th Brigade devolving for a short time on Major G. M. Tufnell, 2nd Essex Regiment, the senior surviving officer, and the command of the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers on Major C. J. Griffin once more. On 22nd November, Second-Lieutenant L. B. L. Seckham had the misfortune to be bitten by a dog in a deserted farm near Le Touquet and had to be sent post-haste to the Pasteur Institute in Paris for treatment. On the night of 10th December, a man of the battalion who was on duty in an advanced listening post was severely wounded in the legs. Owing to the flooded condition of the trenches, it was impossible for the stretcher-bearers to carry him away in the usual manner. Tyrrell, the medical officer, who possessed the physical strength that might be expected from a former Irish Rugby international, went out and, with an entire disregard for his own safety, carried the man back to a point from which he could be taken on a stretcher. For this gallant action he was recommended for a very high honour ; he was awarded the Military Cross in the first list of recipients of this newly created decoration.

The month of November saw the first institution of two systems which were destined to continue with modifications to the end of the war, namely the granting of leave to the United Kingdom and the regular relief of battalions in the front line by those in support and

reserve. The latter had become all the more necessary as the arrival of winter had brought with it an increase in the water which the flat ground of Flanders collected and which found its way in ever greater quantities into the trenches in which the troops were living. Energetic measures were taken to improve drainage, not greatly helped in one case by another unit of the 12th Brigade tapping a sewer which flooded a large sector of trenches! By 10th December, the War Diary records that trenches were "impassable in places, being chest deep" with water, and that a supporting trench had to be abandoned owing to flooding. The battalion medical officer, Tyrrell, prescribed forty-eight hours as the maximum tour in trenches; whereupon, when the battalion was holding the line at Le Touquet, "B" and "D" Companies would be in the trenches for two days while "C" and "A" were in the village itself, and *vice versa*. The solution sought in some places was the building of sandbag breast-works above ground, which were at first known as "High Command" trenches. As some compensation for this depressing state of affairs, a beginning was being made with the organization of comforts in reserve areas, and the War Diary records appreciatively on 26th November that the battalion had hot baths in the brewery at Nieppe. As this village was barely three miles from the front line, it is to be feared that the brewery's proper activities had by then ceased. Entertainment was, however, provided for the troops by some excellent regimental concerts organized by the medical officer and Second-Lieutenant M. P. Gamon. They were copied by other units and soon after the 4th Division Follies started their successful career. Gamon once sang a song representing a soldier coming out of the line, for which he was hung about with every conceivable object from a candle to a shell case: a photograph was taken which later appeared in a fashionable London periodical with the quite serious caption: "Soldier returning loaded with material from captured trench.—N.B. Note shell case being used as a candle stick."

Further signs of the acceptance of trench warfare as a semi-permanent institution were the abolition of the carrying of swords by dismounted infantry officers on 22nd January, 1915, and their replacement by the ordinary web equipment and rifle as worn by N.C.Os. and men; the issue of orders by 4th Division on 4th March, 1915, for the organization of a grenadier company in each brigade, based on one officer, one N.C.O. and 24 men in each company being trained as a grenadier section; and the issue at about the same time of a detailed syllabus of instruction in trench duties and tactics to be given to new units freshly arrived from England. If a unit bethought itself of some useful improvisation, such as a new method of firing rifle grenades, carrying rations or making ingenious loop-holes combining a better field of fire with greater safety, details were collected and circulated by Army Headquarters. There was need of ingenuity to balance the great inferiority from which the British troops suffered in the matter of trench stores and munitions.

The 2nd Battalion War Diary notes on 2nd March, 1915, that the supply of rifle grenades had run out and could not be replaced yet, though the enemy was constantly causing casualties by that means. The enemy was also better supplied with means of seeing what was happening at night, having not only a plentiful store of flares but also a big searchlight which played across the River Lys and forced digging parties to throw themselves flat into the wet, sticky mud.

Deficiencies in personnel were, however, made good. Drafts of officers and men arrived in varying numbers at intervals during the winter. The strength of the battalion on 30th November, 1914, was 18 officers and 814 other ranks, but, in spite of continuous casualties, it was, at any rate on paper, over establishment by the end of February, 1915, and the excess was 70 on 17th March. The total number sent by the 3rd and 4th Battalions to the 2nd Battalion between the 26th August, 1914, and the end of April, 1915, was 38 officers and 1,440 N.C.Os. and men.

The relations between the two "sides" were rather different in 1914 from what they became later when nation in arms faced nation in arms in a struggle which by then had become one of life or death for each. In the early days, feeling did not run as high as it did later, and this was shown on Christmas Day, 1914, when an unofficial truce was spontaneously observed and both sides strolled about on the ground above their trenches. Men of the battalion threw across tins of jam and the Saxons opposite threw back cigars wrapped in German newspapers. Cigars were also received in exchange for a copy of *Punch*, whose editor later waxed lyrical with disgust at the low value apparently attached to his publication. "A" Company played a football match against the enemy with an old tin for a ball; they won 3—2! Towards the evening the Saxons could be seen putting small fir-trees in their trenches and hanging lighted candles on them after dark. But a few days later, normal activity had been resumed and the Germans opened heavy rifle and machine-gun fire at midnight on 31st December 1st January, apparently as a sort of *feu de joie* to usher in the New Year. A curious incident of that night was the wounding of two men of the battalion by one bullet while working on trenches.

On 15th February, the Germans fired incendiary shells into Le Bizet and an empty house caught fire. Company Serjeant-Major R. Ashworth (later Captain, and adjutant, 3rd 5th Manchester Regiment) helped to put out the fire and so to prevent the flames from spreading in the high wind which blew at the time and doing extensive damage throughout the village. He was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

On the night of 19th/20th February, the Germans attempted an attack at Le Touquet, carrying with them wooden apparatus apparently intended for crossing trenches. They were, however, repulsed by rifle fire and grenades. A lively duel with grenades was kept up for some time that night and the next day.

The Battle of Neuve Chapelle took place from 10th to 13th

March, 1915, but the battalion was not involved. The only other incident of this period to which reference should be made is the explosion of a mine beneath the German lines at Le Touquet in April. Mining had been actively carried on by both sides since January and an underground ring had been dug all round a portion of Le Touquet defences known as "Railway Fort" in order to prevent the enemy from sapping beneath it. Later, mines were driven under the German lines. During the night of 7th-8th April, a German counter-mine was discovered and it was decided to blow it up. The following day was spent in preparations above and below ground. At 8 a.m. on 9th April, artillery and a trench mortar shelled the houses of Le Touquet which were still held by the enemy; and rifle fire was maintained from 8 to 8.30 a.m. At 8.30 a.m. the mine went up and with it (according to an officer eye-witness) a number of Germans who sailed into the air accompanied by their breakfasts, frying pans and fires! Enemy casualties were heavy and as late as 1 p.m. an observer saw 29 Germans being carried back across the River Lys on stretchers. Reprisals came in the form of heavy shelling, one 5.9 shell coming through the battalion guard-room when it was full of men, but the total casualties during the day were one man killed and 17 wounded, most of the latter being hit by bricks thrown up by the explosion of the mine.

On 15th April, the battalion moved back to billets in the "Blue Factory" at Armentières, so called on account of its many blue-painted windows, with orders to rest and "get in marching and fighting trim," apparently for an offensive near Le Touquet. From 16th to 27th April, the battalion was occupied in route marches, "free gymnastics," running and football as its daily routine.

The Second Battle of Ypres

On 22nd April, 1915, the enemy shocked the world by employing poison gas to the north-east of Ypres which caused the withdrawal of the troops affected. On 27th April, the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers received orders to move at midday, and later left for Bailleul, where it spent the 28th also. At 7.45 a.m. the next day, the battalion left its billets and had a very hot and dusty march of about ten miles in a north-north-easterly direction to Vlamertinghe (two and a half miles west of Ypres), where it bivouacked in fields shortly after 2 p.m. At dusk, however, it was again on the move to take over from the 1st Royal Warwickshire Regiment part of the line north of Wieltje which had been improvised after the withdrawal on 22nd April. From beyond Vlamertinghe, the trying conditions of the march had been aggravated by the sight of an ever-increasing number of retreating and panic-stricken French native troops, by a pervading sense of apprehension as to what lay in store for the battalion, by the stories of the survivors of the gas attack and by the numerous evidences, patent to eye and nose, of the effects of gas on men, animals and vegetation. All this, however, seemed to have no

effect on the troops, who moved up with an almost enthusiastic swing and with their spirits undaunted. The route lay across the Yser Canal, past the northern outskirts of Ypres and through La Brique to Shell Trap Farm, a name later altered to Mouse Trap Farm on account of its ill-omened sound. The battalion received a warm welcome to the famous Salient, being shelled almost all the way up from the Canal; Major Griffin was wounded in the head though he was able to rejoin two days later, and three drivers and three horses of the transport were killed. Major Griffin at first refused to go to hospital, though he was bleeding profusely, and Tyrrell had to invoke the regulation which provides that all combatant personnel on being wounded come under the orders of the medical service before he could enforce his views on his Commanding Officer. Captain J. E. S. Woodman then assumed command. The march seemed endless, especially as a lack of maps and of sufficient guides caused "B" Company and part of "C" Company to lose their way for a time, as did parts of two other units of the 12th Brigade. The relief was completed by 1.30 a.m. and at daybreak the battalion could take stock of its new quarters, which provided the scantiest protection. Shell Trap Farm stood near the centre of a narrow ridge running north from Wieltje which is one and a half miles north-east of Ypres, the farm being 850 yards north of that village. Before the war, the farm was dignified on the maps by the title of "Château" and it marked this fact by having a moat round it. The position taken over by the battalion was "L"-shaped, the shorter arm being to the east of the farm and held by "B" Company, which faced roughly north, and the longer arm running northwards from it and being held by "D" Company and "A" Company, facing east, with "C" Company, nominally in reserve but actually almost in the front line, between them in the solitary communication trench of the sector. Battalion headquarters were with "C" Company, but the medical officer and his aid post were in the front line near "B" Company's headquarters. There was no direct communication between the two parts of the angle and "B" Company was to all intents and purposes isolated from the rest of the battalion, though it had the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the 2nd Seaforth Highlanders on its right. To the left of "A" Company, the line was continued by the King's Own. As was only to be expected from the circumstances in which this position had to be occupied, there was but little in the way of a continuous trench, especially on "B" Company's front, protection being obtained from banks topped by hedges and from holes dug in the banks, though a certain amount of parados had been thrown up. Of the four machine guns now held by the battalion, three were with "B" Company, one under the command of Corporal T. Channer on the extreme right close to the Seaforths, one under the command of Private J. Lynn just to the west of the Wieltje–St. Julien road and a third under Lance-Corporal A. Hartney between Lynn's gun and Shell Trap Farm. The fourth gun was near Hampshire Farm. The German line was

about six hundred yards away and ran diagonally across the open mouth of the angle.

It had been intended that the 4th Division should co-operate on 1st May in an attack by the French and the Sirhind Brigade on the left towards Pilckem ; and, though this did not materialize, the 12th Brigade received a good deal of the reply of the German artillery to the French guns' preparatory fire, and the battalion lost 3 men killed and 28 wounded. The day was spent in strengthening the position by thickening the banks and building revetments and parados with sandbags. The night was calm.

The Gas Attack of 2nd May

"ST. JULIEN"

And calm, too, were the opening hours of the fateful day of 2nd May, 1915. The air was warm, with a slight breeze blowing from the east, that is from the German lines, and therefore favourable for the use of gas. All was quiet at first, until the British artillery shelled what looked like sand-hills between the lines. Germans were seen running in twos and threes to the point in these hillocks which lay nearest to the battalion's position as if they intended to attack. But no attack came. About midday, the Germans began a heavy bombardment of the whole area, setting the farms on fire one by one and destroying a temporary dressing station. After a while, the shelling ceased ; and the early part of the afternoon was peaceful and gloriously fine.

Then, soon after 4 p.m., came disaster. Just when many of "B" Company had begun to enjoy a drink of tea, shouts went up from several sentries to "look at the German trenches," one man remarking admiringly on the unusually heavy and yellow fumes of the British lyddite shells, as he imagined what he saw to be. Everybody looked and saw yellow clouds coming from jets, put in the German lines three or four to every hundred yards, like water from a hose and shooting straight up into the air. Then they settled down into thick, billowy waves about three feet high, with a fringe of fumes above, and rolled towards the British lines. Their nature was recognized and as they took between two and three minutes to cross No Man's Land, it was possible to give a general gas alarm Positions were manned and fire was opened with rifles and machine guns in case the Germans should be advancing to the attack behind the gas. Such men as had respirators put them on. These consisted of small rectangular pads of compressed cotton wool soaked in a solution of sodium hypochloride which had been issued at Vlamertinghe on a scale of two to each platoon, though most of the signallers and machine-gunners, being "nobody's children," had none at all But these pads were ineffective as they did not cover the nostrils. Fortunately, the medical officer remembered the firemen's trick of holding a wet cloth over the mouth and nose when fighting fumes, and

proceeded to adapt it as best he could. Lack of moisture nearly defeated his plan as the vessels containing water and tea had been upset in the scurry of the alarm and there was no time to go to the moat of Shell Trap Farm. Following his example, however, all those within reach of his voice proceeded to wet their handkerchiefs or any handy piece of material with their urine and tie it over their face. This expedient proved very effective, especially as the natural ammonia helped to neutralize the chlorine in the gas. It is significant that the only officers and men in the battalion who were able to carry on at the end of the day were those in "B" Company's sector who followed Tyrrell's advice.

"B" Company, thus horribly protected, manned the bank in front of it and fired for all it was worth, helped in its determination to face this unfamiliar form of attack by the officers and other leaders who went quickly round pointing out that to move with the waves of gas involved greater risks and longer exposure to it than staying where they were. The right platoon received a message to retire and did so, Corporal T. Channer and Private Burtenshaw taking their machine gun into action again a short distance to the left of Lynn. The latter, kept supplied with ammunition by other members of his team, opened fire with his gun into the gas cloud. When he found that he could not see, he fixed the gun on to a tree stump on the top of the bank so as to be sure of a good field of fire, climbed up, sat straddled behind it, and sprayed a continuous stream of bullets into the cloud, swinging the barrel to and fro in such a way as to hit a wider target amongst the Germans who soon became visible behind the gas, but who were stopped by the fire of British and French artillery as well as by the rapid rifle fire of most of the British line and above all by Lynn's machine gun. He had no respirator ; but he refused to cease firing until all signs of attack had ceased and then turned his attention to looking after those of his comrades who were feeling the effects of gas. At last he himself collapsed and had to be lifted from the parapet and taken to a dug-out . an hour later, blue with the effects of poison, he was carried down on a stretcher to hospital, where he died next day in great agony. His very fine example had an invaluable effect in steadying those around him and his self-sacrificing act was recognized by the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross and by the unusual distinction of a description of the incident in Field-Marshal Sir John French's Despatch of 15th June, 1915. This very gallant man, who joined the 4th Battalion as a boy from the training ship *Exmouth* in 1901 at the age of fourteen and a half and was noted as a gymnast, a sportsman and a bright, cheery, light-hearted soldier, had fought splendidly on all occasions from the beginning of the campaign and had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his work at Le Touquet and also the Russian Order of St. George.

The medical officer, Lieutenant W. Tyrrell, was another tower of strength that day : one man described him long after the war as "more than a hero." He seemed to be everywhere, doing 'as an

officer wrote) "everything which a doctor shouldn't do as well as everything he should do." And it is said that, in his anger at the poison methods of the breakers of the Hague Declaration of 1899, he picked up rifles which could no longer be used by the gasping owners and took his toll of the enemy. He certainly steadied the men who were dropping down and rolling suffocated in the ditch which did duty as a trench, carried many to safety and did what he could to restore them with whiffs of ammonia, which he was even alleged to have poured down a man's throat though he firmly denied this in later years!

After nearly twenty minutes of this nightmare during which "B" Company's signaller, Private Miles, had been unable to get any word through to battalion headquarters as the line had been cut by shell fire, the company found itself once more breathing comparatively pure air, with the yellow clouds rolling on to the rear and its own line intact. It had saved the situation, but at what a cost! Captain J. E. S. Woodman, Lieutenants T. R. Blain and J. W. Evatt, and Second-Lieutenants S. R. F. Spicer and J. Greaves were gassed; and out of nearly two hundred men, only about thirty were fit for any kind of duty. The trenches and surrounding area, reeking with a sickly smell of chlorine, were littered with men already dead and others slowly and painfully dying of asphyxiation.

It was then realized for the first time that there was no sign of life on the left. It was fortunately evident that the German attack had been stopped, but it was equally evident that there was a gaping void in the line originally held by "A", "C" and "D" Companies. At about 6 p.m., movement was seen in the trenches beyond Shell Trap Farm. But was it the enemy or was it part of the other companies? As soon as the situation of "B" Company allowed, Captain Blencowe sent Second-Lieutenant V. F. S. Hawkins over to investigate. He found men of the 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (T.F.), but of "A," "C" and "D" Companies no signs beyond one man on the parapet, completely out of his mind, and three signallers in the headquarter dug-out badly gassed. Shells had been seen falling in this area and some men retiring who were observed to be wiped out by "Jack Johnsons." It was only too clear that the greater part of the battalion was out of action.

As night fell, the firing gradually died down and sick men helped each other down to the aid post at Irish Farm on the outskirts of La Brique. Those that were left grouped themselves under the surviving officers and did what they could to cover the ground originally held by the battalion, Corporal Channer's gun being sent back to its original position on the right and the remainder instructed to fire their rifles frequently while they moved to and fro along a prescribed beat so as to give the impression that the line was still strongly held. But it was only 8 officers and about 80 N.C.Os. and men that were trying to do work for which there had been 33 officers and 1,070 other ranks at the beginning of the day. Nor did darkness bring rest, as another attack was expected at any minute, and it

was a very weary and jaded band, dotted about at wide intervals, which faced the dawn of 3rd May, although two officers came up and some men of "C" and "D" Companies attached themselves during the night. Before morning, the 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders took over the whole of the battalion's sector except that originally held by "B" Company, in which the survivors were concentrated. This party carried on as best it could for the next thirty-six hours, encouraged and sustained by the arrival each night of the Quartermaster, Major W. Bowes, and Serjeant H. Bibby with generous rations gallantly brought up by the transport and with such scanty news as there was, including a story that Second-Lieutenant G. C. Martin had somehow fallen into the moat of Shell Trap Farm and had to swim in it. But nearly half of this small group had to be evacuated to hospital suffering from the effects of gas.

The 3rd of May was not without its anxieties. For the enemy shelled the area intermittently from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m.; and at about midday parties of the enemy came out of their trenches and set about mending the wire which the artillery had cut the day before. One man seemed suddenly to go mad and charged towards the British lines all by himself. But the survivors were in no mood for jests or for mercy and his race was ended after fifty yards. At one period, another gas attack was thought to be coming; but what had been suspected to be gas turned out to be a field of mustard waving in the sultry air.

It is not surprising that it was decided that the line as it was then supposed to run could no longer be held, but must be shortened by giving up the position so gallantly held by "B" Company, which nevertheless formed, with the trenches to its right, a dangerous salient. This operation was carried out during the night of 3rd/4th May, another sleepless stretch spent by the survivors of the battalion in collecting all the spare ammunition, bombs, rifles and equipment that could be of any further use. It was a long task; and dawn was breaking when the 175 officers and men who then constituted the garrison of the battalion's sector assembled behind Shell Trap Farm and marched down towards Vlamertinghe, the new position being taken over by another unit. The enemy moved into the deserted lines two hours later.

If the march of the battalion up to the line late on 20th April had been tedious and dangerous, the march out of the remnants was painful and arduous. It began at 3 a.m. in pouring rain. It was soon daylight, but fortunately the enemy held his hand and every advantage was taken of the scanty natural cover of the ground. At the end of a mile, the party had become a long, straggling line of coughing and spitting men, mostly crawling on their hands and knees, who still found it hard to breathe as their lungs were not yet free of gas. They halted at La Brique to enable the hot and gasping column to recover its breath and its cohesion. On they went again, past the French guns near the Canal which had done so much for them. Progress was slow and men frequently fell out. As known

danger points were reached, violent exhortation and even physical force had to be applied to produce a faster pace till safety was reached again. On they went to the railway crossing west of Ypres, where they were met by a guide. Here some men were put straight into ambulances and taken to hospital. The rest followed the guide for another mile and a half, until finally at 8 a.m. they arrived at some dug-outs just east of Vlamertinghe, where they found Major Griffin, newly rejoined from hospital after his wound on 30th April, and about a hundred men who had had to retire and been too badly gassed to be able to regain the front line of 2nd May. They were also met by Major Bowes, who had prepared a plentiful supply of hot food and drinks. As one of the party wrote shortly after :—

> "We must have been pitiable objects, spitting, coughing and dripping wet ; our faces blue with cold and the results of the gas ; our clothes in a filthy condition ; nearly everyone being helped along, and all shambling like old men, but still trying hard to hold our heads up, having faced the worst invention of German warfare and conquered it."

The battalion remained in the dug-outs till 8th May, men still going to hospital with lung troubles caused by the gas. As it was for the moment of no value as a fighting unit, the battalion moved on 8th May by easy stages to bivouacs four miles north of Poperinghe and lived in the buildings and orchard of a farm which came to be named Suckling Pig Farm because an old sow gave birth to a litter of pigs there at this time and, on the battalion being ordered to move, one little suckling was killed, cooked and divided up amongst the officers to take with them.

Steps were quickly taken to fill up the depleted ranks and, between 9th and 22nd May, drafts totalling 4 officers and 584 other ranks joined the battalion, which on 14th May moved to reserve dug-outs north of Vlamertinghe, on 15th to support at La Brique and on the night of 15th/16th May back to the trenches at Shell Trap Farm held by "D" and "A" Companies before 2nd May. Four days were spent here, the last two being marked by continuous shelling. On the 20th, the battalion was relieved and went into support in some "cubby-holes" near Hampshire Farm, about six hundred yards behind the front line, spending the nights in digging a new set of trenches which were destined to be the 2nd Battalion's front line in August and September, 1916. At about this time, the acting adjutant, Captain W. J. Rowley, who had insisted on remaining at duty in spite of obvious illness, was forced to go to hospital ; and Tyrrell for the next month added the duties of adjutant to those of medical officer, as he did at intervals until the beginning of July. During one of these spells, enemy mining was suspected under part of the line held by the battalion. Divisional headquarters, on being told, asked for further evidence and suggested that the acting adjutant should place tins of water over the doubtful spots and use his stethoscope to identify the alleged sounds of mining.

The Gas Attack of 24th May

(THE BATTLE OF BELLEWAARDE)

The night of 23rd/24th May was peaceful until 2.45 a.m., when the Germans sent up four red lights, followed by two others and by a very heavy bombardment. This in its turn was followed by the heaviest gas attack yet made, both shell and cloud being used. The wind was light and the gas in consequence travelled slowly, rising to a height of forty feet from the ground and blotting out the view over a considerable area; traces of it penetrated as far as twenty miles behind the line. The effect was felt most severely by the troops on each side of Shell Trap Farm where portions of two units retired. Lieutenant-Colonel Griffin at 3.50 a.m. ordered two companies forward to fill the gap, but on a serjeant of one of the units reporting that three of its companies were still holding their trenches, he sent only "A" Company, 120 strong, under Captain J. Collis Browne, who was wounded in the stomach at an early stage. It advanced under heavy fire from enemy machine guns which were already firmly established in Shell Trap Farm; and only its commander and 30 men reached the front line which they entered at the right of the King's Own sector, immediately on the left of the gap, having probably been diverted from their direct line of advance by fire coming from the trenches vacated.

As it was now apparent that the Germans occupied the whole of the gap and had a number of machine guns there, Lieutenant-Colonel Griffin received orders shortly after 10 a.m. for the rest of the battalion to attack again in co-operation with the 1st Royal Warwickshire Regiment and with artillery support, its right being on Shell Trap Farm. "B," "C" and "D" Companies moved off at 10.35 a.m., but by 10.52 a.m. had only been able to go thirty yards beyond the ridge in front of the support line and were still four hundred yards short of their objective. The Royal Warwickshire Regiment was also held up and both commanding officers represented that more artillery preparation was needed to deal with the hostile machine guns. It was then decided that the two units should make a fresh attempt at 2 p.m., helped by two companies of the 1st/5th South Lancashire Regiment. But this attack met with no greater success than its predecessor, and, as the brigadier had come to the conclusion that the whole situation had changed owing to the retirement of units on the south-east side of Shell Trap Farm, leaving the flank of the 12th Brigade in the air, he decided to remain on the defensive. It was, however, intended to make a further counter-attack after dark with the help of three French battalions. But these were not in the end available and orders were issued at 8 p.m. for the attack to be abandoned and for the 12th Brigade to withdraw a short distance to a trench called "French Switch" and to the 4th Divisional support line. At 8.45 p.m. Lieutenant-Colonel L. E. Pilkington, 1st/5th South Lancashire Regiment, who was in command of that line, was ordered to hold it at all costs, calling upon as many of the 2nd Lancashire

Fusiliers in the vicinity as he needed. The remainder of the latter unit was ordered to occupy the 4th Division reserve line with its left on Irish Farm which was about one thousand yards behind the support line, and two thousand yards from both Ypres and the original front line. By 3.16 a.m. on the 25th May, some two hundred all ranks of the battalion were in position in "French Switch" and the Divisional support line. The rearrangement was carried out without interference by the enemy, possibly because he was awaiting the cancelled counter-attack, a copy of the orders for which had fallen into his hands. The casualties during the day had been 1 officer (Second-Lieutenant L. J. Harrison) and 12 other ranks killed and 2 officers and 70 other ranks wounded.

The two actions of 2nd and 24th May come under the general title of the Battle of Ypres, 1915, commonly called the Second Battle of Ypres, and are known as the Battles of St. Julien and Bellewaarde. "Ypres, 1915" was awarded as a battle honour to be borne on the King's Colours, and "St. Julien" and "Bellewaarde" as battle honours to be shown in the Army List.

CHAPTER V

EGYPT—GALLIPOLI—THE LANDING—1st KRITHIA

"HELLES," "LANDING AT HELLES," "KRITHIA"

(Maps 5 and 6)

1st Battalion

1st Bn. In Chapter I, a brief reference was made to the presence of the 1st Battalion at Karachi at the outbreak of war, and it is now time to turn eastward and follow its fortunes for a while. In October, 1914, it sailed in s.s. *Dilwara* with a number of other transports conveying troops from India, escorted by H.M.S. *Swiftsure* and by some of the old Indian Marine ships, and went to Aden. The married families continued homeward and eventually disembarked at Liverpool; while the battalion disembarked at Aden and relieved the 1st Royal Irish Rifles in garrison duty there. In December, after many rumours, the battalion left that depressing station and sailed for England, passing through the Suez Canal on Christmas Day. It landed at Avonmouth on 2nd January, 1915, dressed in red, to the great astonishment of spectators who for many months had been used to seeing no military colour except khaki, and went into billets at Nuneaton, in Warwickshire, as part of the 86th Brigade of the 29th Division, being brigaded with the 2nd Royal Fusiliers, 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers and 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers. This famous formation was indeed a *corps d'élite* as it was formed from overseas garrisons which were kept at full strength in peace time and therefore had no recruits or reservists in their ranks, in contrast to the units of the British Expeditionary Force which, as already noticed, contained as many as 60 per cent. of reservists. After a short spell of leave granted to all ranks, the battalion was entirely re-fitted and re-formed, and hastily prepared for all contingencies. It was inspected, trained in marching with the new and heavy equipment and at last, after a final inspection by H.M. King George V at Wolston near Rugby on 12th March, 1915, embarked at Avonmouth on 16th March with the 2nd Royal Fusiliers and one company of the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers in s.s. *Alaunia*, a fine ship of the Cunard Line, which seemed quite palatial after the ordinary troopships, the animals embarking in s.s. *Mercian*. The battalion's embarkation strengths were 26 officers, 932 other ranks and 25 vehicles in *Alaunia* and 1 officer, 70 other ranks and 69 horses in *Mercian*.

It is necessary to interpose here a short account of the reasons

for this voyage. On 2nd January, 1915, the Grand Duke Nicholas, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies, appealed to Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of State for War, for a diversion to relieve the Turkish pressure on his forces in the Caucasus. Lord Kitchener did not consider that he could spare any troops and suggested a naval demonstration against the defences of the Dardanelles. Naval bombardments took place on the outer forts on 19th and 25th February. On 26th February and again on 3rd March small parties of marines were landed at the foot of the Gallipoli Peninsula and moved unhindered as far as the commanding hill of Achi Baba, which could not be taken two months later even at the cost of thousands of casualties. On 4th March, however, slight opposition was met and the parties returned to their ships. An intermittent bombardment was kept up, culminating on 16th March in a general fleet attack, under cover of which the mines in the Straits were to be cleared. But the loss of three British and one French battleships caused the abandonment of the attempt, although the Turkish defenders of the forts were almost at the end of their tether and did not believe they could stop any further attack. The British Cabinet then decided that, if necessary, land forces must be made available in order to force the Straits. So, after much argument, the 29th Division was put under orders for the Mediterranean and General Sir Ian Hamilton was nominated for the command of the expedition. Its original destination was Mudros, in the Greek island of Lemnos ; but Sir Ian found that this place was unsuitable for a base and moreover that such transports as had already arrived there had been so chaotically loaded that there was no alternative to moving the base to Alexandria in Egypt and re-stowing all stores and transport in such a way that things needed first on landing should be first out of the holds. The delay involved was a priceless boon to the Turks, for they were enabled to complete their defensive arrangements just in time, the place of attack having been indicated to them by the naval bombardments.

It was for these reasons that the 1st Battalion, in s.s. *Alaunia*, once more entered the Mediterranean, the voyage being devoted to training exercises, lectures and fruitless watching for submarines. Malta was reached on 23rd March without incident and, in the station which the battalion knew so well from its stay there from 1899 to 1907, many old friendships were renewed. The kindness and warmth with which the troops had been received in Nuneaton reacted on the officers engaged in censoring their letters for the homeward mail ; and it was found necessary to restrict men to "one sweetheart and one mother." On leaving Malta on 25th March, s.s. *Alaunia* had passed Crete and was nearing the Straits, when orders were received on 27th to go to Alexandria, near which the 29th Division camped at Mex on 29th. Here the battalion met for the first time their comrades of the East Lancashire Division, Territorial Force, including the Lancashire Fusiliers Infantry Brigade. The men looked on each other with mutual approval, for the Territorials

had trained hard during the short period of embodiment while the seasoned Regulars seemed to them the ideal of military manhood. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Ian Hamilton, inspected the Division on 6th April and about this time the battalion made the acquaintance of its Divisional Commander, Major-General (later Lieutenant-General Sir) Aylmer Hunter-Weston, soon to be universally and affectionately known to all ranks as "Hunter-Bunter," a bluff Royal Engineer officer who has already appeared in this narrative as a brigadier at the crossing of the Aisne on 13th September, 1914. The entries in the battalion War Diary for the first five days of April are variations on the theme "Practised disembarkation and landing of ammunition, stores, etc.," and this is a fitting cue for a short explanation of the operations about to be described.

The force at Sir Ian Hamilton's disposal consisted of the 29th Division, two divisions of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps ("Anzac"), the Royal Naval Division and two French divisions. There were three possible landing areas in an attempt to force the Straits. The first was the Bulair Lines at the neck of the Peninsula, where a success would cork the bottle and have a great moral effect, though the terrain was too restricted for a large force and was heavily fortified, in addition to which the sea approaches were very shallow. The second was the Asiatic coast, where there were plenty of room, adequate roads and good artillery positions and observation, with the possibility of taking the defences of the Straits in reverse, the arguments against such a course being that the right flank would lack the support of the fleet until the latter forced the Straits, the distance to be covered was greater and the country was rugged and difficult. The third course was to land on the Gallipoli Peninsula itself, an unattractive proposition at first sight on account of the facts that there were only five possible landing places and they restricted in size and easy to defend, and that the force would consequently be widely dispersed and difficult to control. Moreover the hill of Achi Baba was a formidable obstacle lying right across the southern end of the Peninsula with good observation of all ground to the south. It was considered by the German commander of the Turkish forces, General Liman von Sanders, to be the key to the situation in this area. The country south of Achi Baba is broken by spurs and intervening nullahs and land artillery would be essential for searching it. On the other hand, the ground was the most suitable of the three alternatives for an advance, the fleet could give effective support, the flanks would be secure and there was a reasonable chance of tactical surprise if only by reason of the daring of the plan. For this was the course adopted by the Commander-in-Chief, who decided to land the 29th Division at the southern end of the Peninsula at five places, known as "S," "V," "W," "X," and "Y" Beaches, the Anzac Divisions to the north of Gaba Tepe, and the French at Kum Kale on the Asiatic coast by way of a temporary diversion. The Royal Naval Division was to make a feint near the Bulair Lines.

Official Photograph

Lancashire Landi

This photograph was taken after the war, and includes a numbe in April,

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ng, Gallipoli.

r of objects, particularly in the water, which were not there
1915.)

At length the preparations in Egypt were complete and the force re-embarked. The battalion embarked on 7th April, 1915, in s.s. *Caledonia*, together with the Royal Munster Fusiliers, the Anson Battalion of the Royal Naval Division and the General Headquarters Signal Company, but without transport. The ship sailed on 8th April and reached Mudros on the 10th, the short voyage being relieved only by the rumours which invariably pervade an army. This fine harbour was filled to capacity with every kind of vessel—battleships, colliers, destroyers, mine-sweepers, transports, hospital ships, all protected by a boom across the entrance. The Turks were fully aware of this assemblage, as they were able to send an air reconnaissance over daily, without interference by us. The time passed slowly, but it was varied by practice in embarking and disembarking in the ship's boats, a difficult proceeding owing to the height of the decks above the water.

A reconnaissance of the terrain from the sea was carried out by the staff, accompanied by unit commanders; and final preparations were made as far as possible. The force was at a disadvantage in not having reliable maps, and aerial photography was not at that time sufficiently developed to be able to remedy the deficiency. At this juncture the Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel H. V. S. Ormond, developed heart trouble and was invalided by a medical board. The command thus passed, on the eve of the operations, into the hands of Major H. O. Bishop, the second-in-command; and Major W. B. Pearson became second-in-command. The men spent much of the period of waiting in writing letters home; and some of them contained surprisingly accurate forecasts of the events of the next few days, so much so that the blue pencil had to come into action. At length preparations were complete and, as the Naval Commander-in-Chief, Vice-Admiral J. M. de Robeck, considered that the weather was propitious, orders were given for the operations to begin.

General Hunter-Weston issued a personal note of encouragement to each man of the 29th Division "on the occasion of their first going into action," and Brigadier-General S. W. Hare issued the following Special Brigade Order to the 86th Infantry Brigade:—

> "FUSILIERS,—Our Brigade is to have the honour to be the first to land and to cover the disembarkment of the rest of the Division. Our task will be no easy one. Let us carry it through in a way worthy of the traditions of the distinguished regiments of which the Fusilier Brigade is composed; in such a way that the men of Albuhera and Minden, of Delhi and Lucknow may hail us as their equals in valour and military achievement, and that future historians may say of us, as Napier said of the Fusilier Brigade at Albuhera: 'Nothing could stop this astonishing infantry.'"

On 25th April, 1915, "this infantry" was indeed to prove itself "astonishing" and to cause that day to be remembered for ever as

the most glorious defeat that the British Army has known—glorious from the amazing valour and endurance of the individual infantryman, defeat because (through no fault of the troops) the objectives were not taken and the Gallipoli Peninsula not seized.

The Landing

On the evening of 24th April, 1915, the transports steamed slowly out of the harbour at Mudros amid the cheers of the sailors. The 29th Division was bound for Tenedos, and the troops could see Achi Baba looming darkly on the horizon as the sun set in the cloudless sky. During the night nearly two hundred ships covered the waters of the Aegean. To the north were the ships bound for the Gulf of Saros, with the Royal Naval Division, led by the *Canopus*. Near Mudros lay the Anzac Armada, in readiness for their baptism of fire; at Tenedos were the ships allotted to the Helles landing, and further south again the French squadron heading for the Asiatic shore. The plan of attack was by this time known to all ranks, and special "Orders of the Day" and a message from His Majesty The King were read out to all ranks. The battalion left the *Caledonia* in the ship's boats and embarked on board H.M.S. *Euryalus*, sending "D" Company to H.M.S. *Implacable*. The men were eagerly welcomed on board by the sailors, while the officers were entertained in the ward room. On board the *Euryalus* (Captain R. Burmester) were the headquarters of the 29th Division. The officers of the ships were much impressed by the discipline and bearing of the men, and they remember it to this day, as will be told later.

Till a late hour the sinister outline of Achi Baba could be seen, and the calm of the evening could not dispel a certain feeling of expectancy which was discernible among all ranks, now that the battalion was to be put to the test after nearly fifty years without active service. The fleet silently weighed anchor and through the night the ships zigzagged on a changing course, in order to leave the watchers on the silent peninsula in doubt till the last moment. Before dawn the troops were roused and given a meal by the kind and anxious sailors, while the ships took up their final stations for the preliminary bombardment by nearly three hundred guns. The *Euryalus* lay about two thousand yards from the shore, the *Implacable* a little nearer in. Then came the ship's boats, in tows of six to each company. The men embarked by the gangways, but it was a tight fit to get them in, cumbered as they were with 70 lb. weight of kit each. The young midshipmen in charge of steamboats came alongside and took the boats in tow, with the calm efficiency which they always display; and in a short time, to the cheers of the sailors, the attack was launched. As the steamboats drew off to get into formation the boats heeled over in what seemed a dangerous manner, and one of the men remarked to the cox of his boat, "I 'listed to get killed, not to get drowned." When the boats were a safe distance from the ships the bombardment began again till it

seemed as if nothing could survive as the shells tore up the ground near the troops' destination.

"W" Beach, the 1st Battalion's objective, was some three hundred and fifty yards in width with low cliffs on each side, perhaps one hundred feet high, and in the centre a mound which commanded the full extent of the beach. As the tows got nearer, a belt of wire could be seen stretching right across the beach and the order had been issued that the men were to lie behind this wire till the wire cutters had made gaps for them to pass through. The bombardment, delivered by H.M.S. *Swiftsure* and H.M.S. *Euryalus*, ceased as the battalion approached the shore and from the steamboats came the order to slip the tow ropes. The four naval ratings in each boat then began to pull on the oars to take the boats in, when a heavy and accurate fire was opened at the crew. It was impossible to miss such targets at close range, and the crews were speedily put out of action, while many soldiers were hit. "Overboard" was the order and the men scrambled out as best they could in anything up to four feet of water. Only two boats reached the shore, and the rest of the men waded ashore with great difficulty, as the dead weight was much increased by the wetting. All the rifles were soaked and amid much confusion the men reached the line of wire under very heavy fire enfilading it from both ends, while machine-gun fire met them in front. The silver sand and the sea water jammed the action of the rifles and it was impossible to return the fire. At last one or two rifles were forced open, and a lucky shot laid low one enemy sniper who was taking a heavy toll. The men crossed the wire anyhow, and began to scale the cliff on the left of the beach. The battle became for a time a regular "soldiers' battle," for the men were hopelessly mixed; but after a time "C" Company (Captain R. R. Willis) on the left emerged in some kind of formation and began to scale Hill 114, their objective.

Meanwhile part of "D" Company (Major G. S. Adams), which had landed from the *Implacable*, directed by the latter's captain (Captain Lockyer) and by the headquarter staff, had landed at the salient rocks below Hill 114 with no great difficulty and, scaling the cliff, drove back the Turkish outpost which had done so much damage. The attack on the left was then able to proceed, although the losses had been severe. On the right and centre matters were far worse. Behind the wire lay over three hundred men, and it was not at first realized that these were all casualties. Much time was spent in trying to bring them on, till the reality became apparent. Thus in the actual operation of landing, 63 out of 80 naval ratings were killed and wounded, the brigadier was wounded, and 11 officers and 350 men of the battalion were out of action.

The attack on Hill 138 by "A" Company (Lieutenant R. Haworth) and "B" Company (Captain H. Shaw) met with a fresh misfortune after they had managed to reorganize and press forward. A naval shell struck the top of the cliff and exploded, throwing many men back on to the beach. Haworth was wounded in the back, but

refused to allow himself to be carried back till more troops arrived.

By 7.15 a.m. a line of some sort was established, sufficient to protect the landing place from aimed fire. But the brigadier had been wounded, with the result that the brigade was without a commander; and the brigade headquarters were thoroughly disorganized, for the brigade major was killed in trying to lead some of the men on the cliff near Hill 138.

By this time the situation on the left was clearing up. "C" Company, with a party of men under Captain G. E. Tallents (who carried on in spite of a bad wound), reached the solitary tree on Hill 114, at the expense of many casualties, including Second-Lieutenant G. Needham and a few men made temporary prisoners by some Turks who were eventually surrounded and themselves captured. Needham found the Turks quite cheery fellows, and they did not seem downcast even when captured themselves. They had been in deep dugouts near the edge of the cliff and so were untouched by the bombardment. Lieutenant B. C. H. Keenlyside was wounded when leading his platoon about two hundred yards inland by a Turkish sniper who put up a great individual fight, as witnessed by the pile of cartridges round his body. Lieutenant L. B. L. Seckham was also wounded during the attack, but he continued to lead his men on although the majority of them had been killed or wounded.

Lance-Serjeant F. E. Stubbs was killed near the solitary tree, his objective, to which he had succeeded in leading the remains of his platoon. Lance-Corporal J. Grimshaw had distinguished himself by his coolness and gaiety while sending signals from the cliff top down to the beach and these two N.C.Os. were subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross. Serjeant A. Richards, formerly Serjeant-Drummer, had his leg almost shot off, but he dragged himself through the wire on the beach and continued to encourage others by voice and example till the attack swept on. He too was later awarded the Victoria Cross. Captain C. Bromley and Private W. Keneally also performed such outstanding deeds of gallantry that they too were selected to receive this highest of all decorations.

About this time the Royal Fusiliers, who were attacking Hill 114 from the north, "got their left shoulders too far up"; and they were just beginning a spirited attack on the Lancashire Fusiliers' left when they were spotted by "C" Company's observer and, after considerable signalling with a small flag, they were made aware of their mistake.

Many were the tributes paid by independent and impartial witnesses to the deeds of the battalion on that day. The Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Ian Hamilton, in his official despatch dated 20th May, 1915, wrote:—

> ". . . So strong, in fact, were the defences of W beach that the Turks may well have considered them impregnable,

> and it is my firm conviction that no finer feat of arms has ever been achieved by the British soldier—or any other soldier—than the storming of these trenches from open boats on the morning of 25th April. The landing at W had been entrusted to the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers (Major Bishop) and it was to the complete lack of the senses of danger or of fear of this daring battalion that we owed our astonishing success. . . . Gallantly led by their officers, the Fusiliers literally hurled themselves ashore and, fired at from right, left and centre, commenced hacking their way through the wire. A long line of men was at once mown down as by a scythe, but the remainder were not to be denied. . . ."

He ordered "W" Beach to be re-named "Lancashire Landing" and it was his intention that this name should be as much the official title as "Anzac" was in the case of "Z" Beach; but, alas! rigid adherence to the report of a War Office committee deprived the Regiment of it as a battle honour.

Vice-Admiral de Robeck, in his official despatch dated 1st July, 1915, on the naval aspect of the operation, said :—

> ". . . It is impossible to exalt too highly the service rendered by the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers in the storming of the beach; the dash and gallantry displayed was superb. . . ."

Another naval tribute was a much appreciated signal from H.M.S. *Euryalus* :—

> "We are as proud as can be to have had the honour to carry your splendid regiment. We feel for you all in your great losses as if you were our own ship's company, but know the magnificent gallantry of your regiment has made the name more famous than ever."

Nor did the appreciation of the Royal Navy stop at the end of the operations. For Rear-Admiral Stuart Nicholson, Captain Lefroy and the officers of H.M.S. *Swiftsure* presented to the officers of the battalion a large and beautiful silver bowl, having in bas relief on one side the crest of the ship and a representation of the covering fire which it gave and on the other the regimental crest and the troops leaping from the cutters and struggling ashore. This bowl has the place of honour in the centre of the dining-table of the officers' mess of the 1st Battalion at every guest night and is one of its most treasured possessions. What must be a unique tribute from one Service to another is the fine marble tablet, of which a full description appears in Volume II, erected in the Parish Church of Bury after the War by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Wester Wemyss and the officers and ship's company of H.M.S. *Euryalus* "to commemorate the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the First Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers who fell in action at Gallipoli." To mark

its sense of the honour thus done to it, the 1st Battalion laid up its old Colours over this tablet when the time came to part with them in 1934. And, wherever it goes, the battalion always hears the bell which marked the passing of the hours before the landing; for, in 1934 also, Admiral Sir Rudolf Burmester, who commanded H.M.S. *Euryalus* at the Landing, presented the ship's bell to the 1st Battalion on behalf of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, and it stands with a generous inscription outside the 1st Battalion guard-room and still gives out the time, albeit not in the naval way.

Even the enemy paid his tribute to the deeds of the 29th Division that day. The late Mr. Maurice Healy, M.C., K.C., related how, when on a visit to Constantinople in 1929, his guide told him he had fought in the Gallipoli campaign, and when he learnt that Mr. Healy had served in the Division at a later stage, he said, "The 29th British Division? Then you are my brother. Come with me and I will show you what we think of your Division." The guide led the way to the Turkish Military Museum in which had been set up, in the two most conspicuous places, two tableaux skilfully lit so as to make the scenes more vivid. In Mr. Healy's words:—

> "The first of these two chosen set-pieces represents the Battle of Vienna, fought in 1683, marking the highest point of the Turkish advance into Europe.
>
> "The other shows in the foreground the interior of a Turkish fort. Shells are bursting in mid-air and throwing up the ground where they strike. Turkish guns are firing also, and one can see the waters churned up into foam by their shells and by a hail of machine-gun bullets. Amidst that churning foam can be discerned a steamer and a lot of little boats between her and the shore. In the boats are khaki-clad figures; others run along a gangway from the steamer to the shore.
>
> "On the one hand, the Turk thundering at the gates of Vienna: on the other, the 29th Division landing at Gallipoli!"

The honours awarded to the battalion for the Landing were as follows:—

Victoria Cross

Captain C. Bromley.
Serjeant A. Richards.
Corporal J. E. Grimshaw.
Captain R. R. Willis.
Lance-Serjeant F. E. Stubbs.
Private W. Keneally.

Distinguished Service Order

Captain R. Haworth.

Military Cross

Lieutenant L. B. L. Seckham.
Second-Lieutenant G. Needham.

Mentioned in Despatches

Major H. O. Bishop. Captain G. E. Tallents. Second-Lieutenant G. E. Beaumont. Private W. H. Schofield and those listed above.

About 2 p.m. on the 25th, Colonel O. C. Wolley-Dod, formerly of the Regiment and at that time G.S.O.1 of the 29th Division, who had landed to take over the command at "W" Beach, organized an attack on Hill 138. After a bombardment, the 4th Worcestershire Regiment advanced, cut the wire and by 4 p.m. captured the hill and redoubt. Owing to the deadlock on "V" Beach it was not possible to effect a junction, in spite of attempts by the 86th Brigade to extend their right flank. As night fell the British positions in front of "W" Beach extended from Cape Helles lighthouse through Hill 138 to Hill 114, forming a rough semi-circle. Trenches were dug and were held by the weary troops, after such reorganization as could be carried out. There was no reserve available except working parties of the Anson battalion, and the enemy maintained touch at various points, so that the men were kept on the alert throughout the night.

The difficulty of collecting, collating and forwarding information from troops at five landing places was enhanced by the heavy casualties among higher commanders and staff officers; and the fact that divisional headquarters were on board H.M.S. *Euryalus* made control more difficult.

During the night of the 25th April heavy firing was heard in the north, in the direction of "Y" Beach, and some units at "W" Beach kept up unnecessary fire, even to the extent of using all their ammunition. This was not the case with the XX and the returns show very little expenditure of ammunition—a strong testimony to the excellent discipline after such severe losses. The strength of the battalion was returned as 11 officers and 399 other ranks, so that the casualties were only exceeded by those of the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who had 1 officer and 374 other ranks left after the disastrous experiment of the *River Clyde* landing at "V" Beach.

The losses in some regiments of the Division were, however, trifling and the official historian lays stress on the fact that, with a little more co-operation on the part of the units which met with small opposition, a real success was quite possible. The value of time was not realized and the Turks, under their German commanders, were enabled to recover from their uncertainty and to bring up reserves.

The Turks, however, had only five battalions south of Achi Baba on the morning of the 27th April, and they occupied the night of the 26th/27th April in organizing a new position in front of Krithia, leaving a few posts only in touch with our troops. The Turkish casualties averaged about four hundred per battalion at this stage. Meanwhile the heavy task of landing the ordnance and supplies was being carried on at top speed under the Royal Navy, but as the beaches and anchorages were under continuous fire (fortunately, mostly shrapnel), it was found impossible to keep to scheduled time. Some ten days elapsed before the work was completed.

The Advance at Helles

"Time is a valuable asset in war," and the fatal deliberation of the British movements on the 26th and 27th April gave the Turks a chance of which they made full use. Leaving small posts and snipers in touch with our troops, they gave all their energies to the preparation of a position on the southern slopes of Achi Baba, which was to defy all subsequent attempts to capture that dominating ridge. Owing to lack of determination and will power in the direction of the operations, the advance was delayed and postponed till all the advantage of surprise had been lost.

At 10 a.m. on 27th April, divisional orders were issued from the *Euryalus*. The Division was to advance at 4 p.m. to take up a position from the high ground above "S" Beach to the mouth of Gully Ravine. The interval was spent in reorganizing the brigades; and the 86th Brigade became the reserve. The supporting warships opened fire on Krithia and Achi Baba, but the system of communication was badly organized and the ships had to rely on their own observation.

At 4 p.m. the Division advanced in artillery formation, with two French battalions on the right flank. The country was fairly open and easy, with cypress and olive trees and, in places, carpets of wild flowers. There was no opposition, as the Turks had fallen back to their new position, taking their field guns with them. By 5.30 p.m. the new line was occupied, but the 87th Brigade on the left failed to take up the exact position indicated, with the result that there was a bend in the line, which had serious consequences on the following day. Digging of a perfunctory nature was carried out, for the value of adequate cover was not yet realized, and again, owing to lack of control, there was much useless expenditure of ammunition, evoked by the Turkish patrols. This firing prevented the troops from gaining some much-needed sleep, without any effect except to advertise the presence of the Division.

The first Battle of Krithia was designed to attain a limited object, as it was found that various disadvantages existed which would make the idea of reaching Achi Baba out of the question. Having carried out what might be called a "left wheel" on the 27th, it was now proposed to make a "right wheel." Changing front in face of the enemy is rightly considered one of the most hazardous operations in war. In this case the lack of information was complete and no personal reconnaissance was made before starting this difficult manoeuvre.

The disadvantages which beset headquarters were, first, lack of information as to the enemy, topography, and the exact position of our own troops; secondly, lack of artillery support, twenty-eight guns only being available; thirdly, lack of supplies, many iron rations having been spoilt in the sea when landing; and finally, lack of trained brigade commanders and staffs. The issue of orders by brigades was in consequence rather sketchy, and the complicated manoeuvre to be carried out by the 88th Brigade was apparently

barely understood. The 87th Brigade, however, had only to move forward and their orders were explained at a conference of battalion commanders.

The artillery worked hard to prepare a scheme for artillery support with the twenty-eight guns available. Meanwhile the Turks, aided by the Allies' fatal delay, had had time to prepare positions, and reinforcements of four battalions (two belonging to the Turkish 20th Regiment) had arrived.

The Turks were holding a number of mutually supporting posts of about one platoon each, with advanced posts according to their usual plan. Their position lay at an angle to the projected line of advance.

On 28th April, after a not very convincing bombardment of the position by the fleet and the twenty-eight guns, the advance began, each of the leading brigades having one battalion in support, while the 86th Brigade was in reserve. The 1st Battalion was now organized in two companies, under Captain H. Shaw and Major G. S. Adams. The surplus officers and N.C.Os. accompanied the attack as supernumeraries, as the system of leaving a proportion of a unit behind as a first reinforcement had not then been introduced. Battalion headquarters was still intact so that the battalion was well off as regards "direction" in comparison with other units. The men were in good fettle and their morale was improved by the fact that they alone had expended but little ammunition during the previous days and they still had their packs.

The effect of the intended manoeuvre was soon apparent. The troops on the left did not wait for those in the centre and soon found that their right flank was "in the air."

As soon as touch was gained with the Turks, the troops were, as Wellington said, "attracted by the fire" and the objective was forgotten. The battle became a "soldiers' battle" and by 11 a.m. considerable confusion existed in the centre; ammunition began to fail and, as the Turks sent up their reinforcements, the advance stopped. The 87th Brigade also stopped, although they had met with little opposition. On the extreme right the French, after an initial rush, were held up by skilfully placed advanced posts.

Brigadier-General W. R. Marshall, who was acting as local commander, decided to send in the 86th Brigade with orders to take up ammunition and then, taking the line forward, to capture Krithia.

Lieutenant-Colonel D. E. Cayley (Worcestershire Regiment) was in command of the 86th Brigade and he ordered the Lancashire Fusiliers and the Royal Fusiliers to act as right and left front battalions, with the "Dubsters," as the combined remnants of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Royal Munster Fusiliers were called, in support. However, this corps could not be found. They had been rushed off on an SOS from some officer of the 88th Brigade, a striking instance of the lack of trained staff officers.

Thus the advance of the 86th Brigade was made with two

battalions only. The companies advanced in artillery formation and reached the front line with little loss. Lance-Corporal H. Schofield showed conspicuous courage in exposing himself frequently under heavy fire in order to locate the Turkish trenches accurately. The Inniskilling Fusiliers were in considerable strength in the nullah, but they had difficulty in leaving it, and Captain Willis with two platoons of No. 2 Company decided to call on the men to make a long rush to seize Fir Tree Wood, so well known later on, where the Turks had one of their posts. The men begged to be allowed to leave off their heavy packs, and permission was given. This was a mistake, for the packs were never recovered, and they were soon badly wanted.

After covering fire the two platoons and a few of the Inniskilling Fusiliers started their long rush. Training told and, with bursting lungs, the little party made good the corner of the wood with few casualties, among whom, however, was Lance-Corporal H. Schofield, who, after being bandaged, volunteered to go back across the fire-swept ground with a report calling for reinforcements. It was evident that the Turks had had enough at this point, and with reason, for in one platoon post of about twenty men, every Turk lay dead in his rifle pit, with one exception. 2nd Lieutenant P. D. W. Dunn was sent forward with a patrol and Pioneer-Serjeant W. A. Burchell volunteered to accompany him. He went almost into Krithia and found that the Turks had retired. At this juncture a small party under Captain H. M. Farmar, who was acting as brigade major, arrived, and the situation was explained. The adjutant, Captain C. Bromley, who was with another small party on the left, was wounded in the leg and had to be helped back. Major G. S. Adams with the remainder of No. 2 Company was by this time in the nullah, and as it was impossible to get the line to advance, the small parties in front came back, and the chance of reaching Krithia was lost.

The situation was very confused and the fact that no senior commander could be found to whom report could be made, led to the inevitable result, a retirement. A position behind the nullah was carelessly chosen and the troops dug in. The situation was critical, and boldness and vigour at this point might have changed a stalemate into a local success of great importance. Impressed with this view, Captain R. R. Willis went off to find some responsible commander to whom to report. While on his quest he met a staff officer belonging to the divisional artillery who, after hearing the news, advised him to go with him to divisional headquarters, now at "W" Beach. The orderly's horse was commandeered and eventually the report was made to Major-General Hunter-Weston. The situation in the front line was not improved by the rain and cold which prevailed that night. Then the lack of the discarded packs was severely felt by the men, who lost no time in making up the deficiencies from the many casualties as best they could. In addition to Bromley, the battalion lost Lieutenant L. B. L. Seckham and many

other ranks wounded. Lance-Corporal H. Schofield was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

It was thus that the opportunity of taking Krithia was lost ; the Turks soon found that the attack was at a standstill, and as reinforcements arrived they came back and so strengthened their position that Krithia was never again in danger.

The next two days were spent in perfunctory work in the front line, and no reconnaissance was made. This might have led to very grave consequences had not Lieutenant P. W. D. Conran, who was acting as adjutant in place of Captain C. Bromley, noticed a dangerous gap on the right of the battalion where the front was intersected by a nullah almost at right angles. Certain troops were placed in local reserve, and the 29th Indian Brigade also formed a general reserve.

On the night of 1st May, at about 10 p.m., 2nd Lieutenant P. D. W. Dunn reported that "the Turks were coming on in thousands." Indeed, the Turks, stimulated by their mullahs, could be plainly heard. Wild firing broke out all along the line, except in the battalion sector where the strictest fire discipline was maintained and no fire was to be opened till the enemy was at least discernible. Apart from one short burst of machine-gun fire, the battalion only fired five rounds during the hours of darkness. The silence in front of them was apparently too much for the waves of the attackers, although they included a certain number of German naval officers, and they could not be induced by their leaders to leave the shelter of a small parallel nullah about one hundred yards in front. After a harassing night, for there were no reports from the flanks in response to messages, the false dawn gradually allowed the position in front to be seen. Then, indeed, snap-shooting began, an art in which the Turk was no mean performer. It appeared that the enemy was trying to move across our front into the deep transverse nullah, but at the least exposure the British marksmen showed their skill At one point heavy losses were inflicted on the Turks ; but they also, firing from a flank, killed some of the battalion's best men. At this point Captain Willis, sensing that the Turks had "had enough," persuaded some of them by means of a megaphone and a few Turkish phrases to throw down their arms and surrender. Here, then, the battalion took its first considerable party of prisoners, including at least one German officer. The battalion came off lightly, apart from the men killed from a flank while sniping.

Thus ended what may be called the "Open Warfare" phase of the operations.

CHAPTER VI

GALLIPOLI—SECOND AND THIRD BATTLES OF KRITHIA

"GALLIPOLI, 1915," "KRITHIA"

(Maps 5 and 6)

1st, 1st/5th, 1st/6th, 1st/7th, and 1st/8th Battalions

The Second Battle of Krithia

1st, 1st/5th, 1st/6th, 1st/7th, and 1st/8th Battalions

It would obviously have been wrong to have allowed stagnation to set in at the foot of the Gallipoli Peninsula and not to have made an early attempt to seize Achi Baba, the key to the campaign. The Commander-in-Chief therefore decided to order a general advance for 6th May. In preparation for it, reorganizations took place which brought the 1st Battalion into the 88th Infantry Brigade, on the right of the British line, near the Krithia Nullah; and more troops were landed, including the East Lancashire Division, later to be famous as the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division, in which was the Lancashire Fusiliers Infantry Brigade, consisting of the 1st/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel J. Isherwood, V.D.), 1st/6th (Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Rochdale), 1st 7th (Lieutenant-Colonel A. F. Maclure, T.D.) and 1st 8th (Lieutenant-Colonel J. A. Fallows, T.D.) Battalions of the Regiment. The brigade was very proud to come ashore at Lancashire Landing, where the 1st Battalion had so recently won immortal fame. The 1st/6th Battalion achieved the distinction of being the first battalion of the East Lancashire Division to take over part of the front line, as it did between Gully Ravine and the sea on the night of 5th/6th May, after a tedious march made unnecessarily long by the guides losing their way. The brigade was not, however, to enjoy the quiet period usually allowed to new arrivals in trenches for "running-in," though it had no idea it was to be thrust into an attack within a few hours of its disembarkation.

1st Bn. On 4th May the 1st Battalion had moved back into the second line in rear of Pink Farm, half a mile south-east of Gully Beach. It was still organized in two companies, No. 1 under Major H. Shaw and No. 2 under Major G. S. Adams, and totalled no more than 250 all ranks. Next day it moved into the firing line between the East Krithia road and Krithia Nullah and was attached to the Naval Composite Brigade. Its task during the attack ordered for 6th May was to keep touch with the French on the right and the 88th Brigade

on the left. The advance began at 11 a.m. and was slow, the Turkish shrapnel falling very accurately. No. 2 Company, however, succeeded in reaching a position east of Fir Tree Wood where it dug in. Its flanks were very exposed until the Royal Naval Division came up on either side of it.

1st/6th Bn. 1st/5th, 1st/7th and 1st/8th Bns.

In the meanwhile, the 1st/6th Battalion had been leading the attack on the extreme left, with the 1st 5th, 1st 7th and 1st 8th Battalions behind it. It had to move over open ground where it met heavy shrapnel, machine-gun and rifle fire. But although this was its first experience under fire, there was no wavering and it took its main objective, a ridge four hundred yards from its starting point, in spite of heavy losses, Serjeant A. Hamer being conspicuous for the great ability and courage with which he led half his platoon and earning the Distinguished Conduct Medal thereby. It then dug in. Later in the day, the 1st 8th was sent up in driblets, one company reinforcing the 1st 6th on the extreme left, one going to the left of the 88th Brigade on the east side of Gully Ravine, while a third occupied the bed of the ravine itself.

1st 8th Bn.

1st 7th Bn.

On the 7th, while the 1st Battalion hung precariously but tenaciously to its position near Fir Tree Wood, the 1st 7th, supported by the 1st 5th and the King's Own Scottish Borderers, passed through the 1st/6th and made two attempts to advance, one at 10 a.m. and the other at 4 p.m. They too were met with heavy shrapnel and machine-gun fire and their most strenuous efforts could take them no more than a score of yards forward. The 1st 5th deployed on the extreme left and attacked the feature later known as Gurkha Bluff. But the orders were received very late, the troops were tired and over-laden and the cliff was swept by Turkish fire, while shells from both sides fell amongst the attackers. The attempt was called off after a loss of 180 casualties. That night the brigade was withdrawn to "W" Beach.

1st, 5th Bn.

1st Bn

Dawn on the 8th found the depleted 1st Battalion still clinging on to its position. It saw first the New Zealanders and then the Australians trying to advance, but failing to get more than five hundred yards beyond the trenches held by Adams's party. In the evening he was ordered to take No. 2 Company over the Krithia Nullah and support the Australians. This was a most dangerous operation to attempt. The advance was made in two lines, one under Adams, the other under Captain R. R. Willis. But after the second bound, Willis's party came under such heavy fire that he decided to wait for darkness, which was then approaching. He thereby avoided many casualties and succeeded in reaching the Australians, being soon joined by Adams and his party. The Australian Commanding Officer ordered them to the front line; but they found it so overcrowded that Adams decided to form a support line close behind the firing line. There he and his men stayed till they were relieved next day. It is sad to have to record that, on the day after, Adams, a much-loved officer, was killed by a stray bullet while talking to Willis in his dug-out.

The Third Battle of Krithia

1st, 1st/5th, 1st/6th, 1st/7th, and 1st/8th Battalions

The rest of the month of May passed in trench routine, accompanied by all the unpleasantness of Gallipoli, and in further reorganizations which included the attachment of the 1st Battalion to the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade. By now both sides had full and properly organized trench systems so that the general attack ordered for 4th June, which proved to be a day of brilliant sunshine with a stiff north-easterly breeze, had to be based on principles different from those of its predecessors. Elaborate orders covered every stage of the advance; and the objectives nowhere entailed an advance of more than eight hundred yards. No longer was Achi Baba to be taken in a day.

1st Bn. All the five battalions of the Regiment by then on the Gallipoli Peninsula took part in the Third Battle of Krithia, which lasted for six days. But, whereas the Territorial battalions were involved for the whole of that time in varying degrees, the 1st Battalion (Major H. O. Bishop) took part in the first day's fighting only; and it will be convenient to describe its actions first.

The battalion was occupying the centre section of the front-line trenches at Gurkha Bluff. The plan for 4th June was that two companies should take the first objective, a Turkish trench known as "J 10," and that the other two companies should come forward and carry the whole line on to the second objective, a trench known as "J 11." As elsewhere, the attack was preceded by a long and heavy bombardment by guns of many calibres, ashore and afloat. The results, however, were negligible and in some cases disastrous. The Turks were provoked to a counter-bombardment far more effective than the British shelling; and much of the latter fell short, causing casualties to the 1st Battalion, including Captain T. H. W. Cunliffe and the whole of his machine-gun team with its gun. At 12 noon the bombardment ceased, and "A" (Major H. Shaw) and "B" (Lieutenant J. K. C. Cross) Companies climbed over the parapet and advanced at the double, to be greeted by continuous and rapid rifle and machine-gun fire at one hundred yards range. Many men were hit while still on the parapet. Several managed to advance between thirty and seventy yards. But the Turkish fire was too intense and accurate for any to reach even the first objective, which was, moreover, well protected by mines which caused a number of casualties. "D" Company, gallantly led by Captain H. R. Clayton, followed close behind "B" and were held up with them, though Clayton himself forced his way right up to the Turkish trenches before he was killed. His body was found on the Turkish wire two months later. The explosion of the mines set on fire some patches of gorse on the right. This stopped "A" Company; and, though a few men succeeded in reaching "J 10," most had to get down into a nullah where some cover was to be found. By now

the trenches from which the attack had started had become very congested, partly owing to the arrival of 100 men of the 1st/5th East Lancashire Regiment to act as garrison of those trenches after the 1st Battalion's advance and partly owing to elements of "A" Company being driven back by the gorse fires. "C" Company (Captain R. R. Willis) consequently lost touch with "B" and was unable to get into its proper position to help "B" until it was too late to do so without further useless losses. Major Bishop reported to the brigadier that he could make no headway frontally, but that he proposed to send "C" Company forward to take "J 10" as soon as a fresh attack on both flanks should have afforded the battalion some relief. The brigadier accordingly ordered two other battalions to attack from the flanks at 2.35 p.m. They could make no appreciable progress, however, and the 1st Battalion had no alternative but to reorganize in its original trenches, where it was subjected to heavy fire throughout the rest of the day and most of the night. It was relieved early on 6th June, having lost 14 officers and 500 other ranks killed and wounded. Private D. Brennan was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for going out under heavy fire and rescuing some wounded men from fiercely-burning gorse.

The Lancashire Fusiliers Brigade had in the meanwhile been fully engaged farther to the east. The eve of the battle found it by the Krithia Nullah. In the battle it was not to be employed as a coherent body, but almost piecemeal. For half of the 1st/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel J. Isherwood, V.D.) was to garrison the front-line trenches after their previous occupants, the 1st/6th Manchester Regiment, had advanced; the other half of it was to advance with the second wave of that unit and help it to secure the second objective; half of the 1st/6th (Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Rochdale) was to follow the first wave of the Manchester Regiment as working parties; the other half was to follow its second wave and consolidate the lines gained; while the 1st/7th (Lieutenant-Colonel A. F. Maclure, T.D.) and 1st/8th (Lieutenant-Colonel J. A. Fallows, T.D.) were to be in divisional reserve. At 9 a.m. on 4th June a bombardment by field guns opened with the object of cutting the Turkish wire. At 11 a.m. heavier guns joined in. At 11.20 a.m. all shelling ceased and, by order, bayonets were shown over the parapets so as to induce the Turks to believe that an attack was impending and to man their trenches and thus be a better target for the allied artillery. Actually the Turks made use of the pause to open a storm of rapid rifle fire which was not wholly stopped by the resumption of intense bombardment by the allied guns at 11.30 a.m. At 12 noon it ceased again and the advance began. The 1st/6th Manchester Regiment made good progress; and headquarters and "A" and "B" Companies of the 1st/5th Lancashire Fusiliers were quickly established as caretakers of the original trenches. By 12.15 p.m. the Manchester had captured their first objective. The second wave passed through, accompanied by "C" (Captain W. Webb) and "D" (Captain E. F. Wrigley) Companies of the 1st/5th under Major F. A. Woodcock, T.D.,

1ST/5TH BN.

1ST/6TH BN.

1ST/7TH AND 1ST/8TH BNS.

1ST/5TH BN.

captured three more lines of trenches and began consolidation with their right resting on the West Krithia Nullah about four hundred yards above its junction with the East Krithia Nullah.

Unfortunately, the French farther to the east had not been able to hold positions brilliantly won at the first assault. The Turks were thereby enabled to begin a process of successive enfilading which forced back the British troops from one after another of the trenches they had captured. By the evening of 4th June the British troops on the east side of the Krithia Nullah were only forty yards beyond its bifurcation, so that there was a dangerous gap of some three hundred and fifty yards between the British positions on the two sides of the nullah and an equally dangerous spur of ground between the East and West Krithia Nullahs. To protect the flank of the 1st/6th Manchester Regiment, a guard of 20 men of "D" Company of the 1st/5th Lancashire Fusiliers was detailed to man a barricade placed on the right of the forward trench east of the West
1ST/7TH BN. Krithia Nullah. At the same time a party of the 1st/7th Lancashire Fusiliers, under Major W. J. Law, was sent up to man a deep Turkish communication trench in the spur between the nullahs and almost in line with the 1st/6th Manchester; and a patrol of the 1st 7th kept touch with the troops on the left further up the West Nullah.

1ST/6TH BN. Throughout the day the 1st 6th Lancashire Fusiliers had been fully employed as working parties on tasks of consolidation. But elements of it were drawn into the fighting at various stages; and many members of it distinguished themselves. Company Serjeant-Major B. Allister led a platoon under heavy rifle and shrapnel fire to the capture of a Turkish trench: he cleared one flank himself, killing eight Turks. Private J. W. Child volunteered to attack a redoubt and held it with four other men until relieved ten hours later. Privates R. Allen and H. Butterworth noticed movements in some scrub near their position and went boldly into it on their own initiative under heavy fire: they found a Turkish officer with a machine gun and disarmed him and brought back the gun.

1ST/8TH BN. At 2.45 p.m. part of the 1st/8th Battalion was drawn into the battle, "C" (Captain A. J. Goodfellow) and "B" (Captain E. S. Humphrey) Companies being sent up to reinforce the front line and to fill a gap between the Manchester Brigade and the Royal Naval Division to the east of the Vineyard, on the Krithia road. They succeeded in taking a line of Turkish trenches, though at the cost of some casualties which included the death of Humphrey. But the failure of a renewed French attack towards the right of the line had made the advanced British position so insecure that, at 6.30 p.m., a
1ST/7TH BN. retirement to the main Turkish system was ordered. The 1st/7th Battalion was now sent into the line, a company at a time, to strengthen other units. Like the 1st/6th, elements of it were involved in fighting and individuals distinguished themselves. Privates W. Downton, W. Prince and R. Casey, led by an officer, charged and captured a small Turkish redoubt; and they continued to hold it

after the officer had been killed, using Turkish rifles and ammunition when their own rounds were finished. And, although half of the 1st/5th had been employed as garrison of the original British line, parties of it had worked at improving communication trenches and in bringing in wounded, Lieutenant R. W. Butcher in particular displaying great gallantry and, with Second-Lieutenant G. B. Horridge, being seriously wounded on an errand of mercy. Private G. Stewart went out twice under very severe rifle fire and brought in wounded N.C.Os. and men. 1ST 5TH BN.

As was to be expected, the Turks took every possible advantage of the allied failure on the right and of its consequences all along the line. At 3 a.m. on 5th June four lines of Turks charged in bright moonlight along the spur between the East and West Krithia Nullahs and past the trenches held by "D" Company of the 1st/5th, though they did not reach the line held by Law and his men of the 1st/7th. They did, however, succeed in getting behind the British front line and in taking possession of the East Nullah and the trenches to the east of it and eventually penetrated into part of Law's line. During the morning of the 5th, therefore, Colonel Isherwood of the 1st/5th was ordered to prepare a scheme for the retaking of the East Nullah and the trenches beyond it. His plan was for "A" Company (Captain E. Ashworth) to relieve Law, push on up the West Nullah, clearing it of any enemy and joining up with the troops to the west of it; while "B" Company (Captain W. Wike) and two platoons of the 1st/7th, all under Major F. A. Woodcock, T.D., were to advance by a communication trench running along the edge of the Vineyard at right angles to the British line and occupy part of a Turkish trench at the head of it. The two parties were then to join hands by sapping across the intervening ground. During the day the 1st/8th were still further split up by having to send two companies into the second line. At 10.25 p.m. on the 5th, Ashworth of the 1st/5th, with Lieutenant G. C. Kay, its machine-gun officer, led his men up the nullah, but found it strongly held and could do no more than relieve Law and his party. In the meanwhile, Wike and his "B" Company had advanced by the side of the Vineyard and occupied his objective without opposition. But the Turks were not taking things lying down. "C" and "D" Companies of the 1st/5th, in a trench known as "H 11" (some distance to the left), were attacked several times in the night. And when daylight came on 6th June, Wike found himself completely surrounded and had to withdraw his men. At 7.50 a.m. "A" Company of the 1st/5th, with the details of the 1st/7th attached to it, was also driven back to a position south of the junction of the East and West Krithia Nullahs and dug in there, unfortunately losing both of the battalion's machine guns in the process. At 9.5 a.m. two platoons of the 1st/7th and two of 1st/8th were sent up to reinforce this party, the whole being placed under Law's command. Repeated but unsuccessful attempts were made to regain the trench held by Law the day before on the spur between the two nullahs. Bombing attacks and bayonet 1ST 5TH BN. 1ST/7TH BN. 1ST/8TH BN. 1ST/7TH AND 1ST/8TH BNS.

charges continued over a wide front throughout the morning, using up troops to such an extent that at the end of it the only reserve left in the hands of the Divisional Commander were 70 men of the 1st/7th!

In the afternoon, however, the Lancashire Fusiliers Brigade attempted a concerted and more ambitious operation, which met with some success. The 1st 8th captured a Turkish redoubt, though it lost its Commanding Officer (Lieutenant-Colonel Fallows) and second-in-command (Major E. L. Baddeley) killed. The 1st/5th and 1st 7th succeeded in recapturing a small redoubt, near the junction of the nullahs, which had been taken by the enemy. At the end of the day, the Turkish riposte, though made in great strength and with much gallantry, had been repulsed with heavy losses, his only gain being a small salient by the Krithia Nullah. It was on this day that Private A. Farnworth of the 1st 8th earned the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallant conduct on four occasions in bringing in wounded under heavy fire.

The next day, 7th June, saw much bombing at barricades to keep back Turks who persistently dribbled forward. "C" and "D" Companies of the 1st 5th found themselves in a very exposed position as the result of the withdrawal of another unit on the left. "A" Company of the same battalion, after a brief respite at battalion headquarters, was sent to trench "H 9" to support them. The next two days were devoted mainly to consolidation, though the 1st/8th succeeded in improving their position in the trenches and redoubt at the junction of the nullahs with the help of trench mortars. Private R. Bateson achieved the distinction of being recommended for reward by an officer of another regiment who, when men of a neighbouring unit had been badly shaken, saw him climb on to the barrier which stood between his trench and the nullah up which the Turks were advancing, and deliver rapid fire at them until his hands were blistered, rallying by his conduct and his words those whose resistance had been momentarily weakened. On 10th June a very successful reconnaissance of trenches "H 9" and "H 11" was carried out by Lieutenant B. Burleigh of the 1st 7th, under whom Lance-Corporal S. Wild of the 1st 5th voluntarily led a party into a section of a Turkish trench which was known to be occupied by the enemy, shooting two Turks at close quarters and driving the rest before him until he was wounded by a bomb, an article of which the Turks had an ample, and the Allies a negligible, supply. Soon after, the Lancashire Fusiliers Brigade was relieved, an utterly weary and depleted band which had nevertheless given a very good account of itself in its first experience of trench warfare. During the battle, the 1st 5th lost 130 all ranks and the 1st 7th 179 all ranks, killed, wounded and missing. For reward, the brigade received the following decorations :—

Military Cross

Lieutenant R. W. Butcher, 1st/5th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Sergeant-Major B. Allister, 1st 6th.
Private R. Allen, 1st/6th.
Private H. Butterworth, 1st/6th.
Private J. W. Child, 1st/6th.
Private A. Farnworth, 1st/8th.
Lance-Corporal S. Wild, 1st 5th.
Private R. Bateson, 1st/5th.
Private R. Casey, 1st/7th.
Private W. Downton, 1st/7th.
Private W. Prince, 1st/7th.
Private G. Stewart, 1st/5th.

The Action of Gully Ravine
28th June, 1915

1st Battalion

Gully Spur and Gully Ravine were to prove scarcely less disastrous to the 1st Battalion on 28th June, 1915, than they had on 4th June. Since that ill-fated day, the French had magnificently retrieved their failure ; and the Commander-in-Chief decided to take early advantage of their success on 21st June by capturing certain key positions on Gully Spur and to the east of Gully Ravine whose possession had been shown to be necessary before any advance on the coveted Achi Baba could be made. The 29th Division were to push forward along Gully Spur, taking Turkish trenches known as "J 9," "J 10," "J 11," "J 12" and "J 13" ; while the 52nd (Lowland) Division were to capture trenches known as "H 12" and "H 13" on the east of Gully Ravine. If both attacks were completely successful, a considerable gap would exist between the inner flanks of the two divisions across the ravine.

The task of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers (Major C. Bromley in temporary command) was to fill this gap, the battalion orders going rather further than the brigadier's instructions in stating that the firing line was to entrench on the east side of the ravine. To do this involved passing diagonally through the leading units of the brigade after the capture of the first objective—"J 9," "J 10" and "J 11"—and swinging to the right while other units advanced straight up the spur to the final objective—"J 12" and "J 13." All ranks were to wear between their shoulders a triangular piece of biscuit tin which, by reflecting the sun, would indicate to the artillery and others in rear the position reached by the leading troops. This device was the origin of the red triangle which later became the divisional sign of the 29th Division. For its intended purpose it was almost useless, as it continued to reflect the sun even when its wearer had been killed and his companions driven back. 1st Bn.

The date chosen for the attack was 28th June, which proved to be a day of intense heat. At 9 a.m. a heavy bombardment was opened. It provoked an accurate Turkish reply which caused casualties in the ranks of the battalion as it moved along the mule track at the foot of the cliff by the sea from its bivouacs in West Gully Beach towards its rendezvous at Y Ravine, as it did at 10.15 a.m. after receiving from Major Bromley a stirring address which was warmly applauded. It then advanced up the narrow and

steep ravine from the top of which it had to deploy. "C" Company (Lieutenant D. C. Marshall) on the right and "D" Company (Captain G. C. Griffiths) on the left were to form the firing line; "A" Company (Captain M. Honan) was in support and had the task of bringing up picks and shovels to enable "C" and "D" to entrench on reaching their objective; while "B" Company (Captain Ross) was in reserve with an entrenching role. The leading wave of "C" Company was commanded by Second-Lieutenant N. Petty and that of "D" by Second-Lieutenant E. Westcott. They moved off at 11.30 a.m. and at first went well, although they became somewhat mixed with stragglers from the leading units of the brigade. Soon, however, they were fired on from their outer flanks and obeyed the natural instinct to turn towards the source of danger. "D" swung to the left and all touch was lost with it for many hours. "C" Company reached Gully Ravine lower down than was intended and consequently lost touch with the troops on its left.

Early in the attack, Bromley was wounded in the foot but refused to leave his post, being helped by Company Serjeant-Major J. Hill, who was acting as Regimental Serjeant-Major, when battalion headquarters moved later in the day into Gully Ravine.

In the meanwhile Captain M. Honan and Lieutenant R. F. Scrivener with "A" Company had advanced and captured a Turkish position in the ravine with 62 prisoners and some material. They then proceeded to fortify a position on the eastern side of the ravine and to establish a line between the left of "H 12" and the ravine. They were counter-attacked by the Turks, but succeeded in driving them off with heavy loss. Bromley, unable to get about himself, sent Hill to find out the position in the battalion area. Hill found some remnants of "C" Company in the ravine, but without any officers or its company serjeant-major; and he learnt that Lieutenant P. D. W. Dunn, the machine-gun officer, had been wounded. An attempt was made to advance up the ravine, but nothing could be achieved in the face of very heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. Of "D" Company he could get no news. At 3.30 p.m., therefore, two patrols were sent out to locate the troops on the left; but they failed to do so. Later in the day the 1st Border Regiment, which had brilliantly captured a Turkish trench on the east side of the ravine at the outset of the action, relieved "A" Company between "H 12" and the ravine. After dark the brigade major came to battalion headquarters with orders that 120 men of the battalion were to help the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers to dig a trench connecting "J 11" with the captured portion of "J 12": the work, it may be mentioned in passing, was continually checked by Turkish counter-attacks against the latter. He then set out with Hill to look for the missing "D" Company, which had been reported as being in "J 12" and "J 13." They eventually found a few survivors of it near those trenches: though they had lost their officers and many of their comrades, they had clung grimly to the ground they had reached, Corporal Reed in particular having done magnificent work in helping to repel with

bombs successive Turkish attacks. It proved impossible to evacuate this party, but its commander, Lance-Serjeant Hayes, was ordered to withdraw it to Gully Ravine when he found himself able to do so.

Early on 29th June the working party with the Dublins was relieved and Bromley was at last persuaded to go to hospital (to lose his life in a torpedoed hospital ship shortly afterwards), Lieutenant J. K. C. Cross assuming command of the battalion, which was withdrawn from the line in the afternoon of the same day, having lost 166 killed and 25 wounded. Company Serjeant-Major J. Hill received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his valuable work during the action.

CHAPTER VII

GALLIPOLI—SUVLA · TRENCH WARFARE · THE EVACUATION—EGYPT AND SINAI

"GALLIPOLI, 1915," "LANDING AT SUVLA," "SCIMITAR HILL," "EGYPT, 1915-17," "RUMANI"

(Maps 5, 6, 7 and 8)

1st, 1st/5th, 1st/6th, 1st/7th, 1st/8th and 9th Battalions

WITH the Turks holding the heights commanding the British positions across the tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula, there was by now little hope of any advance along the direction of the original landing; nor was there room in that area to use many reinforcements if they were made available. The invaders could not make any headway; and considerations of prestige were held to forbid evacuation. When, therefore, additional divisions were allotted to the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in July, 1915, the Commander-in-Chief (General Sir Ian Hamilton) decided to use a large part of them for a new landing at Suvla Bay, combined with a thrust from the nearby Anzac front, with the object of severing the middle of the peninsula and securing the heights of Achi Baba which commanded the Narrows beyond them. At the same time, he planned a new attack on the Helles front to make such progress as might be practicable with the additional troops allotted and at least to hold there, or attract thither, the maximum number of Turks during the Suvla operations.

A SERVICE BATTALION'S BAPTISM OF FIRE

"LANDING AT SUVLA"

9th Battalion

Amidst all the controversy that has raged about the responsibility for the failure of the plan for a new landing at Suvla Bay, from which so much might have resulted, nobody has ever dared to suggest that any blame could be attached to the regimental officers and men who took part in it. Indeed, the story of the deeds of the 9th Lancashire Fusiliers (Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. Welstead, Leicestershire Regiment) at Suvla shows clearly that more than once they took the initiative in seeking to snatch success out of the chaos produced by ill-luck and bad staff work and that throughout they displayed great qualities, all the more creditable because it was their first

9TH BN.

appearance in action—indeed, the first serious fighting to be undertaken by any Service battalion of the Regiment—and because they were faced with conditions for which they had had no training worthy of the name.

The task of the 9th Battalion was to seize Hill 10, half a mile east of "A" Beach on which they were to land in Suvla Bay, while the 11th Manchester Regiment, landing on their left, was to swing left and advance along Kiretch Tepe ridge. The 8th Northumberland Fusiliers and 5th Dorsetshire Regiment were to join the 9th Battalion on Hill 10; and all three battalions were to attack Chocolate Hill from the north, advancing not later than 1.30 a.m. on 7th August. These orders did not reach units until shortly before midday on 6th August. Secrecy had been carried to excess as regards the date and place of the new landing: no opportunity had been given for adequate reconnaissance beyond the fact that Lieutenant-Colonel Welstead, dressed as a sailor, had been allowed to view the scene of the projected operations from the deck of a destroyer; and the maps issued were both late in arriving and inaccurate. The country in which the battalion would find itself on landing was mostly a sandy and flat plain, but rocky and covered with thick, thorny scrub, with the Salt Lake (dry in summer) on the right, and ridges surrounding the plain.

Lieutenant-Colonel Welstead issued his orders at noon: "Z" Company (Major C. E. Tristram) was to land first and clear Hill 10 with two platoons, while the rest of the battalion formed up on "A" Beach. At 5.30 p.m. on 6th August the battalion embarked and left Imbros, headquarters and "W" Company (Major C. O. Ibbetson) in lighter "K 2" towed by a destroyer, H.M.S. *Bulldog*, and the remainder under Lieutenant-Colonel W. J. Woodcock in lighter "K 1" towed by another destroyer, H.M.S. *Grampus*. The convoy waited for dark to fall at about 7.30 p.m. before leaving the vicinity of Imbros. The date had been specially chosen as the moon was not due to rise till after the troops were intended to be ashore; the night was, however, unusually dark. At 10.30 p.m. the destroyers anchored a mile from shore and cast off the lighters, which then made for the shore under their own steam, their "puffing" plainly audible to the Turks and drawing desultory fire. Unfortunately, the naval craft had been carried away from their proper course, so that "K 1" and "K 2" were by now not opposite "A" Beach but a thousand yards to the south of it, being even south of the seaward outlet of the Salt Lake known as "The Cut." It was a part of Suvla Bay in which the Navy suspected shoals: at 10.35 p.m., "K 2" went aground fifty yards from the shore; and a few moments later "K 1" went aground on its left, ten yards nearer the land. The Turks at once opened a brisk fire from the shore in front and from the high ground at Lala Baba, six hundred yards away to the right. No one knew the depth of the water alongside the lighters. So Lieutenant E. H. Davies, about the shortest officer available, was lowered by a rope over the side of "K 1": he reported that at least his head was

above water ; and the depth proved to be actually about four feet six inches—which did not leave much margin for the short Lancashire men.

Within a few minutes, "X" (Captain E. M. Elwell), "Y" (Captain F. R. L. Lowth) and "Z" Companies, headed by Tristram, splashed their way ashore with hoarse cries of "Remember Minden." Company Serjeant-Major T. Bleackley plunged into the water at the head of his company and did valuable work in leading his men ashore. The Commanding Officer also stood in deep water and helped men off the lighter, being slightly wounded in the head at about this time, though he did not mention it. The Turkish picket at the battalion's landing point fled, leaving behind two casualties ; but the Turkish guns began to shell the beach.

"Z" Company went straight ahead as ordered (unaware of the error in course) to attack Hill 10, but soon found itself on the edge of the Salt Lake with no sign of its objective. When "X" and "Y" Companies had formed up on the beach, two platoons of "Y" were sent forward to cover "Z"'s right, being followed by the remainder of the company. But there appeared to be a gap between "Z" and these two platoons of "Y," through which Turkish riflemen were thought to have penetrated. Lieutenant-Colonel Woodcock therefore obtained leave to take forward a platoon of "W" Company, with which he drove back some snipers and established touch with "Z," whose line he prolonged to the right, covering the edge of a little hillock with a *donga* beyond. Some Turks were only about twenty-five yards away in a rough entrenchment protected by wire. At daybreak these Turks charged ; but there was light enough for a few minutes' rapid fire to drive them back. Woodcock thereupon ordered a counter-charge but was seriously wounded as he stood up to lead it. He made his way back to the beach, where the Commanding Officer told him that he had sent the rest of "X" Company forward under the adjutant, Captain M. C. Ferrers-Guy, and that he intended to follow shortly himself with more men. Soon afterwards Lieutenant-Colonel Welstead was killed by a bullet through the head.

Throughout the night "Z" Company had been under severe strain, losing all its officers. The adjutant took command of this part of the battalion's position, helped by Captain F. R. L. Lowth and Lieutenant H. J. Brierley. Soon after dawn another battalion came up on the right of the 9th Lancashire Fusiliers and began to fire at it but was eventually stopped by an officer. When it was light enough for the ground to be seen clearly, the 8th Northumberland Fusiliers and the 5th Dorsetshire Regiment were ordered to advance, with the support of the 9th Lancashire Fusiliers, and to attack Hill 10. "W" Company went forward, with some of "Y" under Major C. O. Ibbetson, to whom a staff officer pointed out a mound, about a mile inland, as being Hill 10. Ibbetson led a charge which carried the mound at the point of the bayonet. But his party at once came under heavy fire from a field work in front and from

trenches which enfiladed them. He ordered an attack on the trenches, which were taken at the cost of heavy casualties. Ibbetson was himself wounded, but refused to leave the line. The trenches just taken proved to be enfiladed by the field work ; Ibbetson could therefore only order every man to take cover. The mound from which they had moved was suddenly evacuated by the troops which had followed Ibbetson's party, which was now completely isolated for several hours until a battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment attacked the field work. The Fusiliers joined in, killed a lot of Turks as they were retiring, met another party of the enemy who were about to counter-attack and scattered them. After further adventures, Ibbetson handed over his party to the Commanding Officer of the 5th Dorsetshire Regiment, by whom he was ordered to go to hospital, weak from loss of blood as the result of remaining in action twelve hours after he had been wounded.

The senior officer now left with the 9th was Captain M. C. Ferrers-Guy, 7 officers having by now been killed and 7 wounded. Company Serjeant-Major T. Bleackley again did yeoman service ; when two of his company's officers had been killed, he took command of a platoon, reorganized it and led it on. The situation on the whole front of the battalion was very confused. Our own and the Turkish dead lay twenty yards apart on the sand hills. Tristram lay wounded in the head within a few yards of three dead Turks and was nearly burnt to death when the scrub caught fire from the bursting of the enemy's shells. Fortunately he was rescued, thanks to the pluck of Private I. Walton. Some of the wounded perished in the flames, though others were saved by the gallant efforts of Second-Lieutenant D. Graham-Brown and others. Many displayed great endurance that day, conspicuous among them being Private S. Birtwistle, who was wounded early in the day but refused to leave the line until the evening.

By 5 p.m. the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Dorsetshire had begun to dig in on the ground they had made good, with the 9th Lancashire Fusiliers consolidating on Hill 10. Early next day, 8th August, the battalion was ordered to support the Dorsetshire in a further advance and advanced without loss to a position two hundred and fifty yards behind that unit. By now the battalion had captured a white Turkish pony and two water-bags, which were useful when it was safe to move them. That night the battalion was ordered back to Hill 10, to be ready to help the Dorsetshire in an attack next day. Ferrers-Guy accordingly reported at 5.30 a.m. on 9th August to the O.C. 5th Dorsetshire Regiment, which had already deployed. The 9th Lancashire Fusiliers formed up on its right, with two companies in front and two in support, and advanced with it. When the attack had begun to develop, Ferrers-Guy received orders to withdraw the battalion and place it in general reserve two miles to the rear. The men were very exhausted and thirsty—one man died of thirst. Ferrers-Guy came to the conclusion that he could not carry out the orders without losing half his remaining

strength. He therefore halted the battalion behind a spur, from which he could support the Dorsetshire if necessary. That night orders were again received to retire. But Ferrers-Guy disliked the idea of giving up ground gained and had, moreover, seen a Turkish officer's patrol, which had been driven back, coming on again as if reconnoitring for a counter-attack. He therefore decided to stay where he was, after consulting the O.C. 5th Dorsetshire Regiment, who agreed with him and undertook to explain matters to the brigadier. The battalion entrenched all round the spur and was subjected to Turkish rapid fire all night. It was ordered not to reply unless the Turks attacked, which they did not.

On 10th August the battalion did, however, retire when ordered, and entrenched itself on the right of the Dorsetshire. It spent the next day improving its trenches and was ordered to rejoin its own division, from which it had been separated throughout the fighting, but was unable to do so as the unit which should have relieved it was too exhausted to do so. It was relieved on 12th August and withdrawn for a rest, which consisted in doing fatigues, digging trenches for horses and carrying shells of no mean weight. The battalion's losses in officers totalled fourteen ; those of other ranks are not recorded. The decorations awarded were :—

Distinguished Service Order
Captain M. C. Ferrers-Guy.

Distinguished Conduct Medal
Company Serjeant-Major T. Bleackley. Private S. Birtwistle.
Private I. Walton.

The Battle of the Vineyard

1st 5th, 1st 6th, 1st 7th and 1st 8th Battalions

An essential part of the Commander-in-Chief's plan for the new landing at Suvla Bay was an attack on the Helles front, designed to hold the Turks and to attract as many enemy reserves as possible to that area during the operations further north. In order to make the most of the available artillery and machine guns, the attack was to take place in two successive phases, each supported in turn by the full number of guns. The 29th Division therefore attacked on the afternoon of 6th August to the west of the Krithia Nullah, but without success ; the second phase of the attack was to be delivered by the 125th and 127th Infantry Brigades of the 42nd Division next morning.

The 125th Brigade, with the French on its right, held a frontage of four hundred yards (so small because of its heavy losses) from a point one hundred yards east of Achi Baba Nullah to the south-western edge of the Vineyard, with the 1st/5th Battalion (Major G. B. G. Wood in temporary command) on the right and the 1st/8th (Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. Rogers, 1st Royal Dragoons), the 1st/7th

(Lieutenant-Colonel C. T. Alexander) and the 1st/6th (Major R. L. Lees, V.D., in temporary command) Battalions in that order on its left. The brigade's two objectives were the Turkish front-line system, called "F 12" and "G 12," and the Turkish main support line, called "F 13" and "G 13"; both contained intricate tangles of trenches.

1ST/5TH BN.

At 8.10 a.m. on 7th August intense artillery and machine-gun fire was opened on the Turks. At 9.40 a.m. the attack went in. In the 1st/5th Battalion, the operation was carried out by two parties, the 1st Assaulting Force, composed of "C" (Lieutenant W. C. Yapp) and "D" (Captain W. Horridge) Companies with a total of 120 men, and the 2nd Assaulting Force, composed of "A" (Captain A. M. Paton) and "B" (Captain S. H. Milnes) Companies with 130 men; there were also two bombing parties on the right under Second-Lieutenant A. P. Hudson and one on the left under Corporal Leach. "C" and "D" advanced at a steady double and occupied part of "F 12," a dummy trench affording practically no cover; they got down in it, however, and tried to give covering fire for the advance of the 2nd Assaulting Force. These two companies, following ten minutes later, reached "F 12" at the cost of heavy casualties. The survivors were gallantly led forward by Milnes, but could make little headway in face of the Turkish fire. All the officers were hit and the remnants could only fall back to "F 12" and try to consolidate there. The result was great congestion in the shallow trench which it was almost impossible to deepen owing to the hardness of the ground and the persistence and accuracy of the Turkish musketry. Horridge clung tenaciously to a piece of high ground to the east of a small nullah between the Vineyard and Achi Baba Nullah; but his party was exposed to oblique fire and its losses were heavy.

1ST/8TH BN.

1ST/7TH BN.

In the meantime, the 1st/8th had attacked in three lines but had failed to get beyond the Turkish front line; while the 1st/7th, advancing at the same time, made good the greater part of the Vineyard. Some parties, under Major W. J. Law, reached the second objective, but found themselves exposed to enfilade fire and superior numbers.

1ST/6TH BN.

On the left of the brigade front the 1st/6th took both their objectives with great dash. At about midday the Turks counter-attacked and succeeded in driving the Lancashire Fusiliers out of most of their gains. All four battalions made gallant efforts to recover their losses and were partly successful, particularly in the Vineyard. At 2 p.m. the 1st/5th received a further counter-attack but drove it off with the help of artillery.

At 4 p.m. the Turks came on again. The 1st 5th were driven out of their positions. A party led by Second-Lieutenant F. Whittam (promoted from serjeant two days before) and Company Serjeant-Major J. H. Yates at once organized a bombing party, with which they retook about eighty yards of the lost trench; but unfortunately a barricade intended to consolidate their success was put up in the wrong place and their efforts were wasted, Whittam and Yates being killed. Major G. B. G. Wood organized another party and succeeded

in clearing part of the evacuated trench ; but no further progress could be made. Milnes had been severely wounded ; and Pioneer-Serjeant J. Smith was killed in a gallant attempt to bring him in. Drummer P. Cavanagh also displayed great bravery, though wounded himself, in dragging in a comrade who had been hit in both legs.

The Turkish counter-attack fell equally heavily on the 1st/8th, which was driven back after suffering such heavy losses that only 7 officers and 73 other ranks were left in the firing line. The 1st/7th and 1st/6th, however, managed to retain their hold on the Vineyard, the second-named, splendidly handled and encouraged by Major Lees, even beginning to dig a communication trench on the western side of it and then making it a fire trench. Great gallantry was shown by three members of the 1st/7th : Serjeant T. W. Field, though wounded in four places and losing three out of a party of four men, held on to a threatened length of trench until a successful counter-attack could be organized ; Private J. Cryer on his own initiative rallied a party of men when all the officers and N.C.Os. of his detachment had been killed or wounded and, charging at the head of it, recaptured a lost trench ; and Corporal J. Blacklock exposed himself freely in full view of the enemy and under very heavy fire in order to encourage his men.

For the next two days ding-dong fighting took place in and around the Vineyard, but without substantially altering the situation. The brigade was relieved on 9th August. The comment in the 1st/7th Battalion's War Diary may be taken as typical of all the battalions : "Our men were thoroughly worn out, the strain having been enormous. Out of 410 N.C.Os. and men going into action, only 139 returned."

In spite of the heavy losses and much apparent failure, the four Territorial battalions had succeeded in winning and holding a tactical point of value and had held down a large Turkish force which would have been very welcome to the enemy farther north. The following decorations were awarded :—

Distinguished Service Order

Major G. B. G. Wood, 1st/5th. Major R. L. Lees, V.D., 1st/6th.

Military Cross

Captain W. Horridge, 1st/5th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Serjeant T. W. Field, 1st/7th. Corporal J. Blacklock, 1st/7th.
Private J. Cryer, 1st/7th.

Another Part of the Holding Attack

1st Battalion

While the Battle of the Vineyard was raging, the 29th Division had also been taking part in the holding attack, between Krithia Nullah and Gully Ravine. Here too the Turks put up a fierce resistance; here too the attack as a whole was unsuccessful; and here too the Turks were not content to remain on the defensive but counter-attacked. It was to help in dealing with a Turkish counter-attack which had obtained a footing in "Hampshire Cut," about three hundred yards east of Gully Ravine, that the 1st Lancashire 1st Bn.
Fusiliers were called upon early on 7th August to send up two companies, "A" and "B." They supported the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in ejecting the Turks, but suffered heavy casualties. In the days following the action, Lance-Corporal C. McGinn won the Distinguished Conduct Medal by crawling out under heavy fire with water to a wounded man, being wounded himself in so doing, and later leading a party of volunteers to bring in the dead and collect the arms of casualties.

Another Gallant Attempt at Suvla

"Scimitar Hill"

1st and 9th Battalions

The position in which the troops were left at the end of the fighting immediately following the landing at Suvla Bay could not be regarded as satisfactory. It was therefore decided to launch a new attack on 21st August, 1915, to capture a line running from south to north from the "W" Hills to Scimitar Hill, both about two and a half miles inland, as a safeguard for the future. The 11th Division, containing the 9th Battalion, was to take "W" Hills and the 29th, containing the 1st Battalion, Hill 112 and Scimitar Hill. The attack was timed for the afternoon so that the sun should be behind the British troops, help their artillery and blind the Turks. Unfortunately, unusual banks of cloud rolled up soon after midday; and the Turkish positions were hidden in a haze, for it was a very hot day. A bombardment opened along the whole front of attack at 2.30 p.m., but proved of little value.

The 9th Battalion (Major M. C. Ferrers-Guy), with the 5th 9th Bn.
Dorsetshire Regiment, was ordered to seize some trenches four hundred and fifty yards to their front. It had only seven officers. One platoon, under Lieutenant A. Parke, was ordered to advance during the bombardment, to seize favourable ground as near as possible to the Turkish line with a view to helping the Dorsetshire, and to enable the latter to fire at the Turks if they retired. A patrol under a serjeant was ordered to keep in touch with the 2nd/10th Gurkha Rifles on the right. As soon as the advance began at

3 p.m., the battalion came under heavy rifle and shrapnel fire. Only two officers reached the Turkish trenches, and one of them was wounded. The signalling serjeant was killed and the telephone and wire he was carrying forward were destroyed. The patrol sent to the right was soon forced to retire as the Indian advance from the Anzac sector had not begun. Nevertheless by 3.10 p.m. the battalion had taken its objective, all the Turks in the trenches being killed or wounded. Many spades and a few picks were found and speedily used to begin the consolidation of the position. Ferrers-Guy was wounded a few minutes after the attack began, but insisted on going forward to tell the men how best to make their position secure. He could not, however, carry on and had to go back to a dressing station, handing over command to Captain F. R. L. Lowth. Though details are lacking, it is clear that the battalion clung gallantly to its objective for nineteen hours without any response to its repeated calls for help and finally had to fall back to its starting point, with less than 100 men left and no officers or warrant officers. Of the 29 officers who had embarked for Gallipoli on 5th July, only 4 were still unhurt by 22nd August.

1ST BN

The 1st Battalion (Major W. B. Pearson) fared little better. It was brought round in s.s. *Clacton* from "W" Beach on 19th August and disembarked by lighters at 4 a.m. next morning in Suvla Bay, moving to the rear of Chocolate Hill, where it rested till daylight. On 21st August it moved to brigade reserve while preparations were made for it to support the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers in an attack on Hill 112, a well-marked feature at the end of the Anafarta Sagar spur, a little to the north of the "W" Hills. It was known to be strongly entrenched. It lay about fifteen hundred yards to the east of the British line, but the Turkish front line was some five hundred yards forward of Hill 112. The wide stretch of No Man's Land was rough, stony and studded with patches of shrub. The latter caught fire in many places and caused much disorganization amongst the troops as they advanced and several explosions of ammunition ; all this led to the loss of direction and the mixing of units. The battalion advanced at 3.30 p.m. and was met by heavy machine-gun and rifle fire which produced serious casualties, often in scrub to which fire spread. Private J. Quinn showed great bravery, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, in going out and rescuing a wounded officer who was lying in the midst of a fiercely burning grass fire.

At 4.12 p.m. Pearson received a message from the Royal Munster Fusiliers saying that they had been held up owing to losses in officers. He ordered "A" Company to advance to their support ; a few minutes later "B" was ordered to reinforce "A" ; and somewhat later "C" was sent forward to pick up the line of "A" and "B" and then press on with the whole. But by 4.30 p.m. the advance had been held up and no part of the line was within five hundred yards of the Turkish front line. An hour later O.C. "A" Company reported that he was supporting the Munsters, but

was wounded. Less than an hour after that the senior N.C.O. of the company reported that there were only four unwounded men left. "D" Company was therefore sent up under Second-Lieutenant J. F. T. Harrison. At about the same time Pearson heard that 150 unwounded men were at the entrance of a nearby trench; but efforts to organize an attack with them were of no avail in view of the heavy fire coming from Hill 112. Soon after, the Munsters were compelled to retire to the trench occupied by the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. About fifty men of all companies of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers were collected by a subaltern, who was ordered by Pearson to make an attack; but they were very soon driven back by shell fire into the Dublins' trench. By 7.30 p.m. it was evident that the attack had completely failed and that the scattered positions gained by the Lancashire and Dublin Fusiliers were of no value and most insecure because of similar failures elsewhere. The remnants of these units were therefore ordered to retire behind Green Hill. The 1st Battalion had lost 12 officers wounded and 222 other ranks killed, wounded or missing.

Trench Warfare, Mines, Storms and Floods

After the unfortunate affair of Scimitar Hill, the Regiment's battalions on the Gallipoli Peninsula had perforce to settle down to trench routine very much after the Flanders style, but often with greater discomfort. Mining was carried out by both sides. During the night of 13th/14th October, two Turkish mines exploded in the line held by the 1st/7th Battalion east of Gully Ravine, causing eight casualties and temporarily entombing several others. On 14th October the British exploded two mines against Turkish galleries in the battalion's area. The same battalion was again involved in mining activity on 29th October when it was holding a sector of the line on both sides of Gully Ravine. At 11.20 p.m. a Turkish mine exploded near "Cawley's Crater," one hundred yards east of the Ravine, slightly damaging the battalion's trenches and entombing five men. And on the following night a mine shaft in the battalion's line was blown in by the explosion of a Turkish mine; the unit showed its resentment by heavily bombing the enemy throughout the night. 1st/7th Bn.

The deplorable conditions on the Peninsula, with its flies and lice, its insanitary state, its tropical heat and its monotonous and unsuitable food, had caused much dysentery, jaundice, septic sores and other ills. Numbers dropped so severely that in October the 1st/5th and 1st/8th Battalions had to be temporarily amalgamated under Lieutenant-Colonel F. A. Woodcock of the 1st/5th and the 1st/6th and 1st/7th under Major C. T. Alexander of the 1st/7th. 1st/5th, 1st/8th, 1st/6th and 1st/7th Bns.

Nature had not, however, exhausted all her ammunition in her fight against the troops. On 15th November there came a violent storm with deluges of rain. Bales of hay, sacks of bread and drowned mules were washed away down Gully Ravine into the sea. All the battalions of the Regiment on the Peninsula felt the storm, though

the 1st/5th suffered most. A worse storm occurred during the night of 26th/27th November when Gully Ravine quickly became a bed of deep mud and almost impossible to cross. But though the Territorial battalions recorded bitter cold, the sloping ground of their Helles sector made their ordeal much lighter than that endured

1ST BN. by the 1st Battalion on the flat ground of the Suvla front, where no revetting material was to be had to keep trench sides up. The battalion was in the line near "Dublin Castle," two thousand yards north-north-east of the Salt Lake. Two hours after the storm broke the water had flooded all its trenches, coming in "as though it had been a tidal wave." Several men were drowned and much equipment was washed away. The water subsided to an average depth of four feet early the following morning; but the men could do little except lie huddled behind the remains of the parados of their trench and throw up enough cover to protect them somewhat from shrapnel fire. Parties had to be given leave to retire from the line as they were too exhausted to work or fight. Several failed to reach hospital and died of exhaustion on the way. Serjeant C. A. Batham, who was in command of the battalion's stretcher-bearers, made five journeys up to his waist in icy-cold water to help wounded men. He even carried one wounded man on his back from the line to a dressing station. His splendid work earned him the Distinguished Conduct Medal. A bitter north-east wind blew throughout the day, causing further deaths from exposure. Towards the evening of 27th November the weather grew worse and a snow blizzard set in and continued all night and most of the next day. It had the merit of screening the movements of parties who took advantage of an order issued by the brigadier that all men not fit to fire a rifle were to be sent back to field ambulances and that the whole brigade would abandon all but key positions. Another advantage brought by the storm was that not a fly survived it. But the 1st Battalion lost about 20 men drowned, at least 19 frozen to death and 11 officers (including Major W. B. Pearson) and 525 other ranks evacuated to hospital suffering from the effects of exposure.

More Mining: "Boyd's Crater"

1ST/7TH BN. Throughout the first fortnight of December, 1915, the 1st/7th Battalion (Major W. J. Law) had dug and sniped their way forward by slow and steady stages. On 14th December Lieutenant W. R. Hartley led a patrol with great boldness and judgment close up to the Turkish trenches near "Cawley's Crater." One of the party, Private F. Mottershead, located the entrance to a mine-shaft in a trench system called "The Gridiron," close to the eastern edge of Gully Ravine, only six yards from a crater occupied by the battalion. Captain A. W. Boyd, Corporal W. Downton, D.C.M., and Privates C. Bent and F. Mottershead volunteered next day to carry out the destruction of this mine-head. Mottershead carried a charge of 40 lb. of gelignite round his neck; and the party succeeded in placing it in position on the inner slope of the Turkish parapet

without being observed. In addition to the electric wire for firing the explosive, a thin rope was attached to the charge so that a slight jerk would cause the latter to fall into the shaft. As it was essential that the rope should be laid in a straight line, Mottershead had to return to the British trench over the top of the Turkish wire, moving upright and in full view of the enemy. All this was safely accomplished, the rope was jerked and the gelignite fired. Hartley, who was killed three days later, went out and confirmed that the entrance to the shaft was completely filled: the battalion's War Diary added: "Mine now a thing of the past." Congratulations poured in from higher commanders and Private F. Mottershead was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

The evacuation of the Suvla and Anzac fronts was now imminent and the 1st/7th was ordered to undertake one of several small attacks on 19th December which succeeded in their object of distracting Turkish attention from that difficult operation. Two mines were laid at "The Gridiron" with the intention that advantage should be taken of their explosion to establish bombing stations in the craters formed. The 1st/6th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. F. Fawcus, 1st/7th Manchester Regiment) held the original front line and supplied catapult parties to fire from behind the attackers. Major W. J. Law was to have directed the whole operation but was unfortunately killed two hours before the time fixed for the attack. Captain A. W. Boyd thereupon assumed command of the attacking party, found by the 1st/7th, while Captain M. R. P. W. Gledhill took over command of the battalion. At 2.15 p.m. one of the two mines exploded on the far side of a great crater which held a Turkish and an English trench on either side. The explosion blew in the Turkish trench and extended the crater, which the attacking party, led by Boyd and including a bombing squad under Second Lieutenant L. Morrison, crossed. They then pressed on down the horns of the Turkish trench and constructed barricades, Private C. Bent being conspicuous for his gallantry and useful work. The artillery had given good support to the operation, but had provoked Turkish retaliation which was very heavy for an hour and a half, though it did little damage. It did, however, knock out two men and damage the gun of a machine-gun team led by Serjeant A. Harvey, who withdrew to another position and got his gun into action again. By 6 p.m. the new line was well established in spite of rifle fire and enfilade machine-gun fire which caused some casualties. A Turkish counter-attack at 9.40 p.m. drove the party back. But Boyd organized a counter-attack with great promptness and, putting himself at the head of a party of bombers and with the support of Morrison, succeeded in retaking the lost ground by 9.55 p.m. and in making a further gain. Bent was again to the fore. Indeed, bombing parties had to be restrained from going too far in pursuit of the Turks. Later in the night the party was withdrawn to a position of safety and the second mine fired, catching a number of Turks seen moving up a sap, probably in order to deliver a further

1ST/7TH BN.

counter-attack. Consolidation of the whole of the new position was successfully completed next day in spite of shelling by a Turkish heavy gun. The Corps Commander, Lieutenant-General Sir Francis Davies, sent his congratulations to the battalion and authorized the crater to be officially named "Boyd's Crater." The decorations awarded were :—

Military Cross

Captain A. W. Boyd. Second-Lieutenant L. Morrison.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Serjeant A. Harvey. Private C. Bent.

The Evacuation

The failure of all attempts to advance on any of the sectors on the Gallipoli Peninsula and various other factors had brought about a decision to withdraw all troops from it, beginning with the Suvla and Anzac fronts in the middle of December. The 1st Battalion embarked from Suvla on 14th December and went to Mudros, where, to its surprise, it was transhipped next day and sent to Helles to occupy very dirty bivouacs on the East Krithia road till it took part in the final evacuation on 2nd January and sailed for Alexandria. The 9th Battalion left Suvla on 18th December and, after a month's stay in Mudros, sailed to Alexandria at the end of January, 1916. The Territorial battalions embarked from Helles on the night of 27th/28th December and, after a fortnight in Mudros, likewise went to Alexandria. The evacuation of all six battalions was accomplished without serious incident, though naturally there were many anxious moments and the operation was not helped by the prevailing mud and pitch darkness. The 1st/8th Battalion was relieved in the front line on Christmas Eve and bivouacked on the cliff-side north of Gully Ravine, hoping for a Christmas Day of rest and peace. At 8.0 a.m. on 25th December, however, it was turned out and ordered to move up the Ravine to bivouacs north of the Eski line. On its way up it passed divisional headquarters, where a band was playing the carol "God rest ye merry gentlemen," which the battalion thought singularly inappropriate !

1ST BN.

9TH BN.

1ST/5TH, 1ST/6TH, 1ST/7TH AND 1ST/8TH BNS.

Egypt and the Suez Canal

The 1st Battalion went to France in March, 1916, having spent some weeks in the defences of the Suez Canal at Darb-el-Haj, about four and a half miles, and El Kubri, about six miles, north of Suez. The other battalions evacuated from Gallipoli were to spend many months in Egypt, training, manning defences and making new defence works, particularly during that process of pushing out a line to the east of the Suez Canal which followed Lord Kitchener's caustic question whether the troops lining the canal itself were protecting the canal or whether the canal was protecting them. The Territorial battalions moved from Alexandria to Tel-el-Kebir in January, 1916. They spent part of that month and

1ST BN.

February at Shallufah, a few miles north of Suez, gradually pushing posts out to a final distance of seven miles east of the canal at the end of two months. The posts were given names which make clear their origins—such as "Bury Post," "Salford Post" and "Wigan Post." The work was carried out under difficult conditions, for the fine sand was not easy to hold in position and the weather was often oppressively hot. In March the first issue of a few Lewis guns was received ; they were tried out at the end of the month and found "very satisfactory." In that month and in April the brigade was in camp in the desert two miles north-west of Suez and carried out training. During a signal scheme in April, three men of the 1st 5th died of exhaustion and heat ; another signal and scouts scheme had to be abandoned in May as the men were suffering from heat and lack of water in the Ataka Hills. The 1st/7th and 1st/8th Battalions were sent to El Kubri and Shallufah at the end of May to help a new division speed up its share of the defences : in spite of great heat, the Lancashire men did more work than the new arrivals from East Anglia and London. At the end of June all four battalions moved north to the central sector of the canal. The date chosen coincided with a *khamseen* (dust storm) which made striking camp and, indeed, the whole operation very difficult. The 1st/5th and 1st/6th took over defences at "Ballybunion," a post in the desert about six miles east of the canal, while the 1st/7th and 1st/8th became responsible for the defence of the Kantara bridgehead.

1ST 5TH, 1ST 6TH, 1ST 7TH AND 1ST 8TH BNS.

The 9th Battalion moved to Minden Camp, six miles east-by-south of El Ferdan, towards the end of February, 1916, and did its share of training and of work on the defences of the railhead at that place. In June it moved to the Kantara sector ; and at the beginning of July it sailed for France.

9TH BN.

March and Countermarch in the Sinai Desert

"RUMANI," "EGYPT, 1915-17"

1st/5th, 1st/6th, 1st/7th and 1st/8th Battalions

At the end of July, 1916, a large Turkish force, led by German officers, was reported to be advancing, with astonishing speed in view of the difficulties of the Sinai Desert, from El Arish westwards with the intention of invading Egypt. A mobile column was thereupon formed for operations east of the line of fortified posts covering the Suez Canal so as to deal with this threat before it approached any vital point. Camels were collected for stores, ammunition, water, and the like. Kits were reduced to a minimum. The 125th (Lancashire Fusiliers) Infantry Brigade formed part of this column and moved hurriedly to the north of Kantara in the last week in July. Unfit men were withdrawn from it (300 from one battalion) and formed temporarily into a composite unit for canal defence.

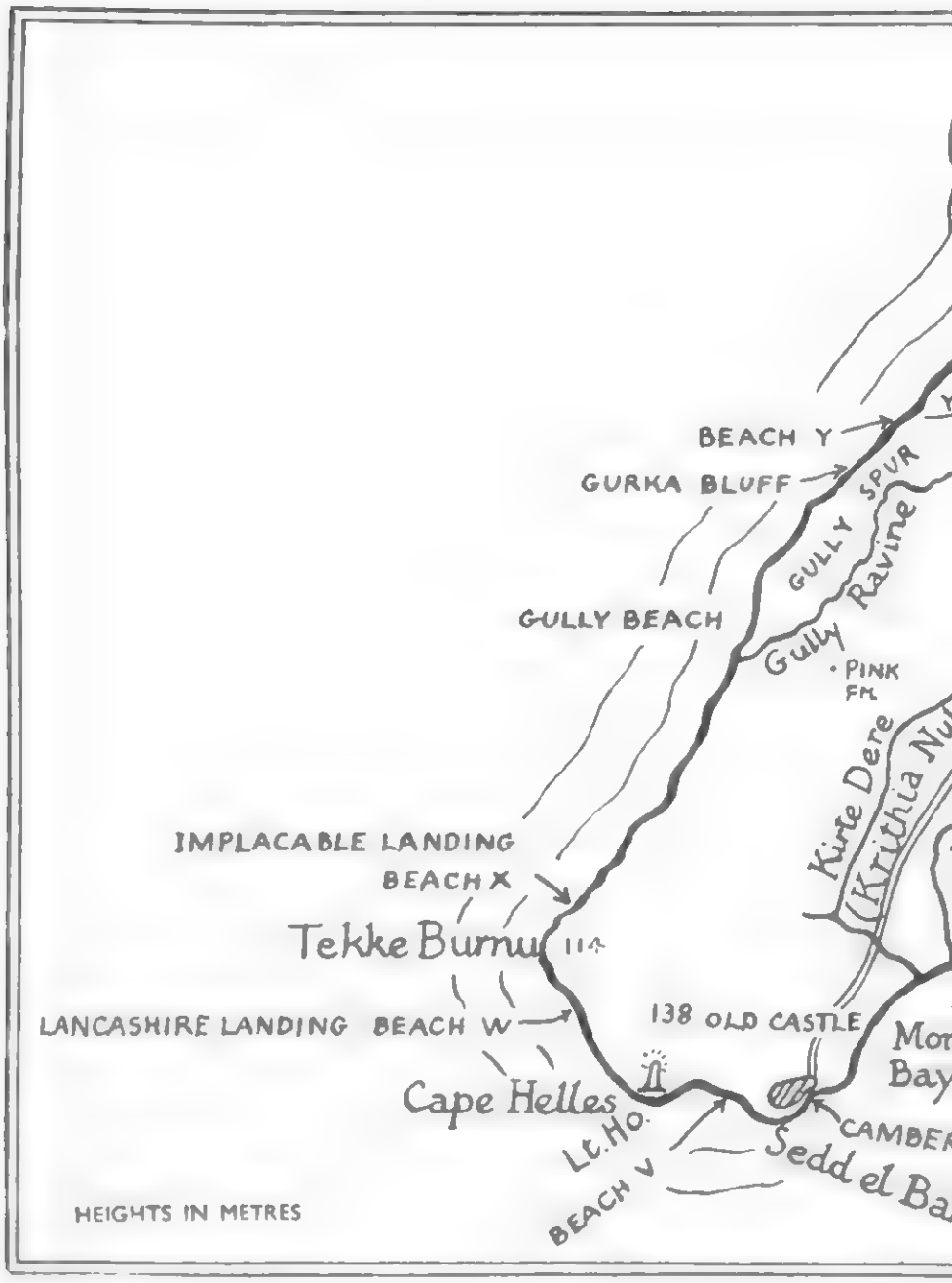
1ST 5TH, 1ST 6TH, 1ST 7TH AND 1ST 8TH BNS.

On 4th and 5th August, 1916, there was fought the "Battle of

Rumani" in which the Turkish force fell into a skilfully laid trap, suffered severe losses and was driven headlong eastward. The scenes of the heaviest fighting were at Romani itself and at "Mount Royston," four and a half miles south-west of it. The Lancashire Fusiliers were not involved in the fighting, though they could hear its sounds; but they qualified for the battle honour "Rumani" by being in divisional reserve during it. On 4th August they moved by train from Kantara to Pelusium, one company of the 1st/8th Battalion being sent back on arrival as escort to part of the 2,000 Turkish prisoners taken by mounted troops that day.

The success of the day's fighting put an end to all possible threats to the Suez Canal and it was now the turn of the British to threaten the Turkish positions in the Levant. Early on 5th August the 125th Brigade began to march forward, the 1st/7th Battalion without any breakfast. The heat was stifling and many men of the brigade fell out on the march. After a halt at "Mount Royston," the brigade moved on to "Mount Meredith," five miles to the east of it, where it took up an outpost position. The night was chilly and very little food or drink reached the exhausted troops. Between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. next morning the brigade began another and even more trying march, to Qatia, the 1st/7th once more missing its breakfast. The heat was again intense and again many men fell out: Captain C. C. Fitzgerald, M.C., medical officer of the 1st/7th, was most energetic in looking after these casualties, for whom search parties were later sent out, their task being none too easy as the missing men had crawled under scrub for shade wherever they could. The sand was very loose and came over boot tops. Some hills were so steep and difficult that men had to crawl up them on their hands and knees. But as they advanced over the rolling desert, the leading troops could see the Turks retiring beyond Qatia and were encouraged to stagger on. Arrived at the Qatia oasis, the brigade put out an outpost line. The transport men of units had a particularly hard time at this stage, bringing up much-needed water—for the local supplies were mostly brackish; and Second-Lieutenant F. H. Mainprice, of the 1st/7th, who was in command of the brigade camel convoy, was later mentioned in despatches for his tireless work to relieve the sufferings of the units.

For the next week the brigade remained on outpost duty at Qatia, which was bombed daily. On 14th August it moved back to Romani. For the next three months the four Territorial battalions took turns at training and work on defences or manning defences at Romani and near Kantara and at resting by the seaside at Mahamdiya. In the meanwhile a railway was being built across the Sinai Desert from Kantara towards the frontier between Egypt and Palestine, at the rate of a mile a day. During November the 1st/5th Battalion formed part of the outpost troops protecting the advancing railhead. At the end of November the whole brigade marched some forty-eight miles in six days from Pelusium to El Mazar, eighty miles east of the Suez Canal and twenty-five miles from El Arish,


BEACH Y
GURKA BLUFF
GULLY SPUR
Gully Ravine
GULLY BEACH
Gully
· PINK FM
Kirte Dere
(Krithia Nu
IMPLACABLE LANDING
BEACH X
Tekke Burnu
114
LANCASHIRE LANDING
BEACH W
138 OLD CASTLE
Mor
Bay
Cape Helles
Lt.Ho.
CAMBER
Sedd el Ba
BEACH V
HEIGHTS IN METRES

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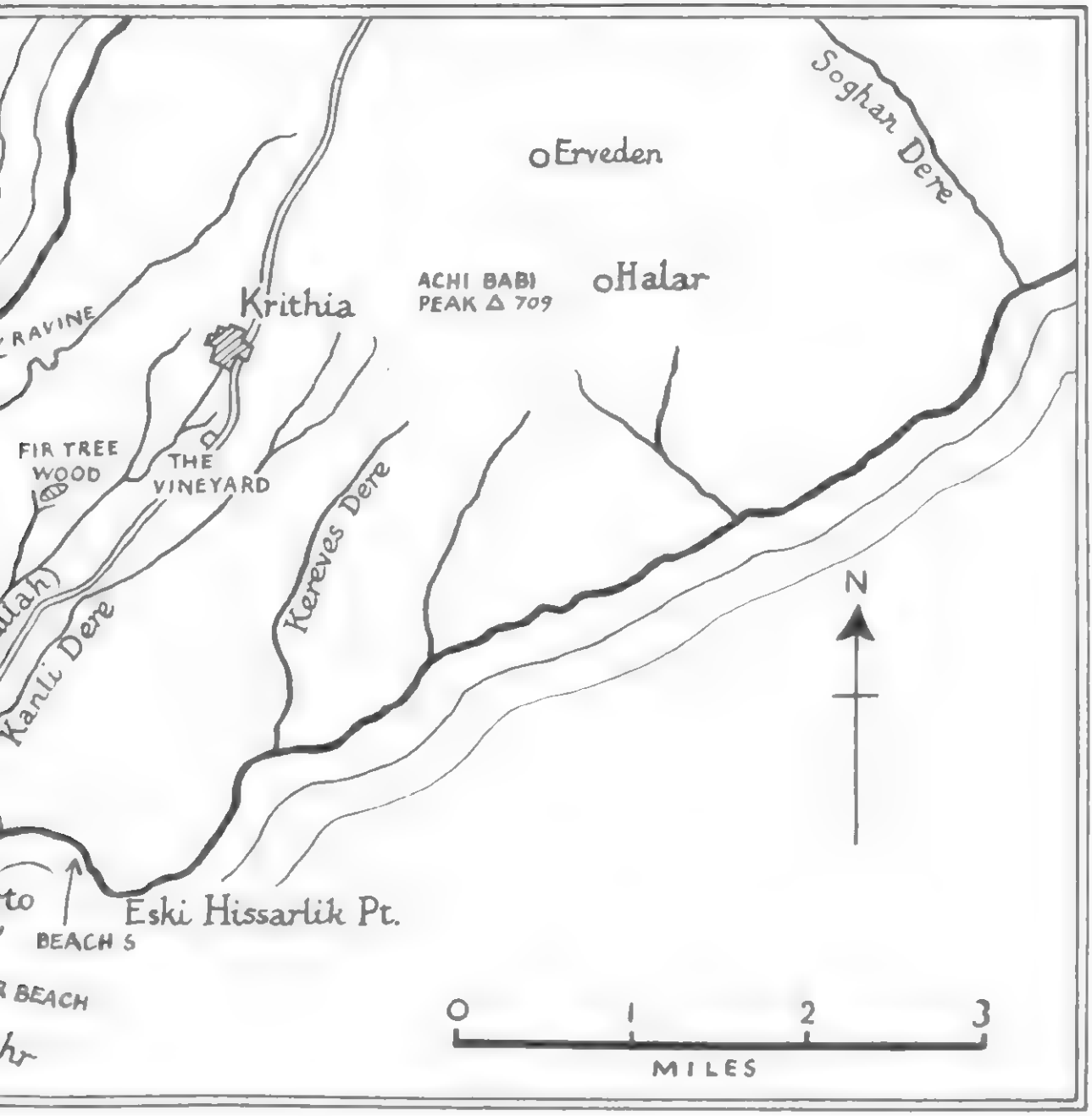
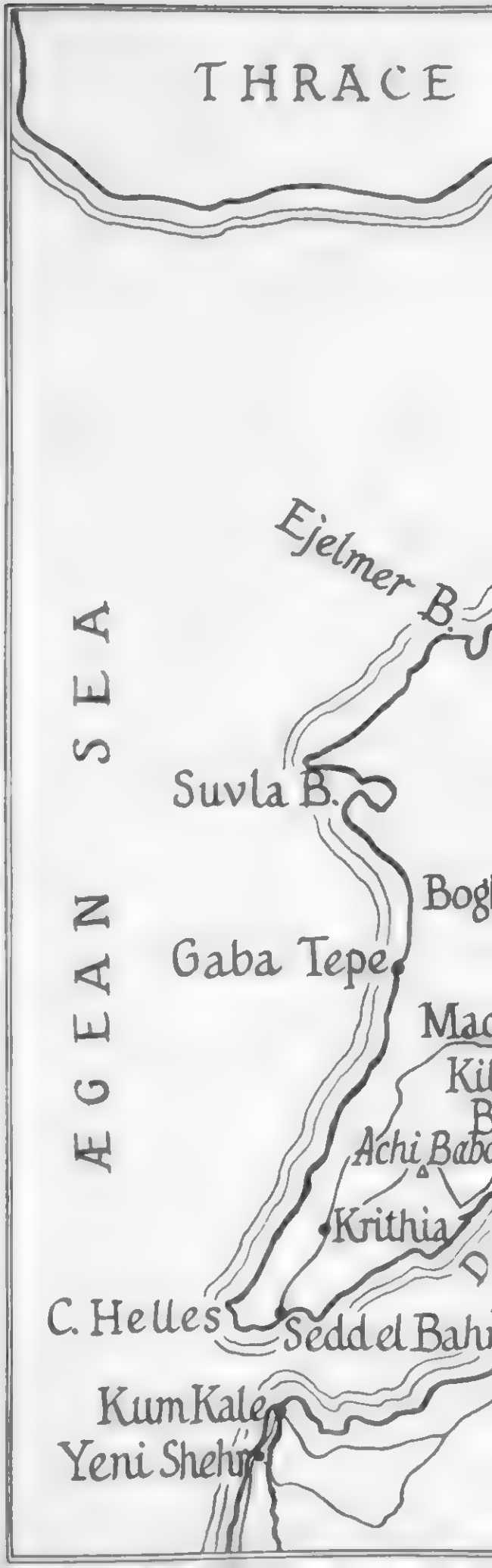
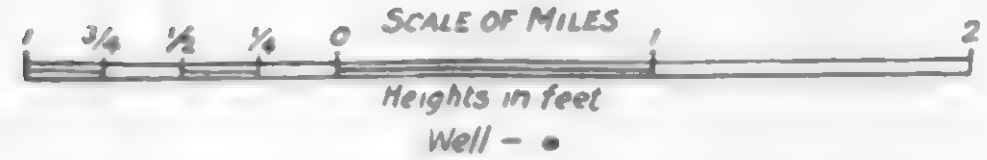
ELLES AREA MAP No. 6




THRACE
Ejelmer B.
AEGEAN SEA
Suvla B.
Gaba Tepe
Achi Baba
Krithia
C. Helles
Sedd el Bahr
Kum Kale
Yeni Shehr

Ibrija
GULF OF SAROS
Bakla Bay
Bulair
Bulair Lines
Yeni Keui
SEA OF MARMORA
GALLIPOLI
N
hali
DARDANELLES
Nagara Pt.
Chanak
ANATOLIA
Scale in Miles
5 4 3 2 1 0 5 10



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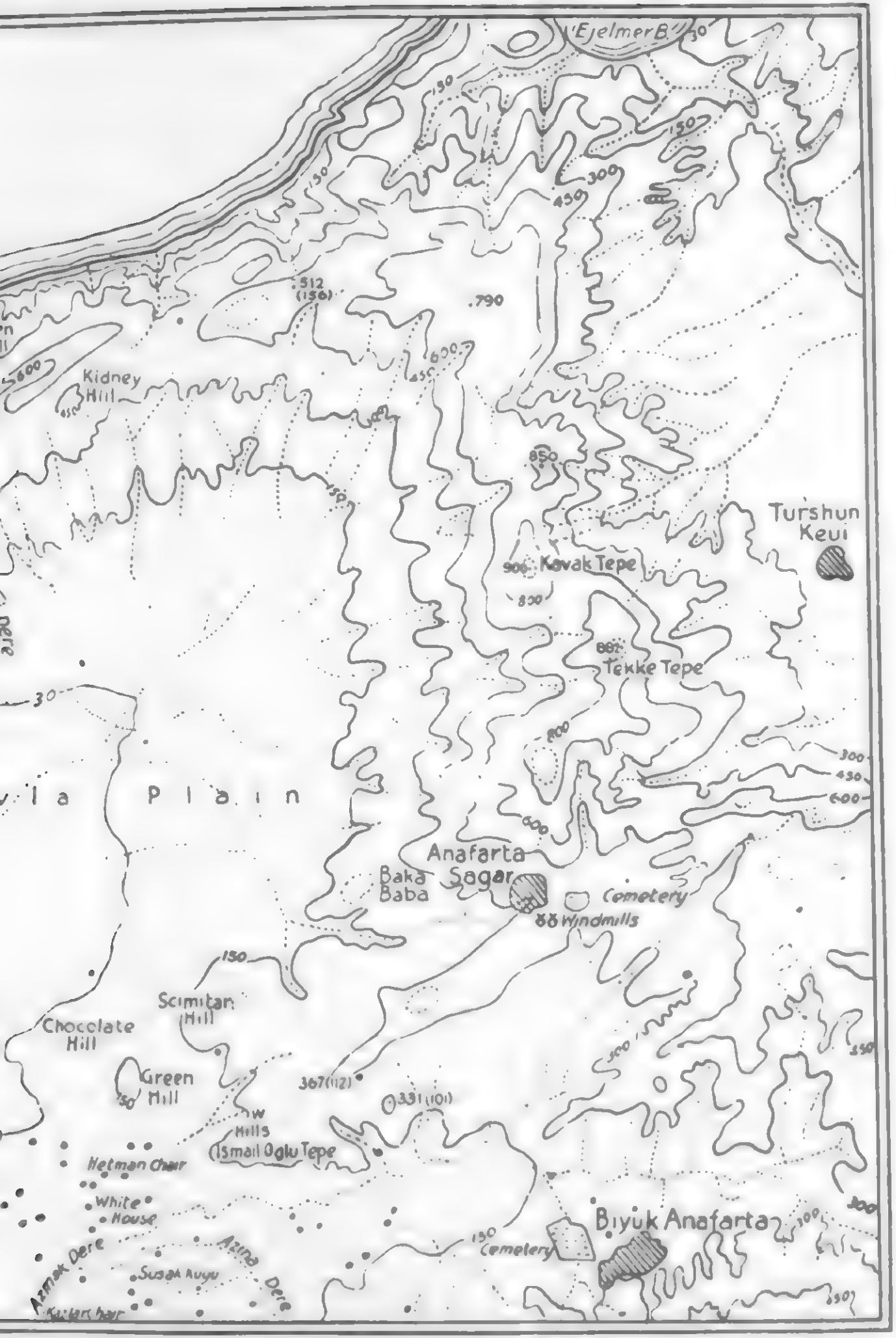
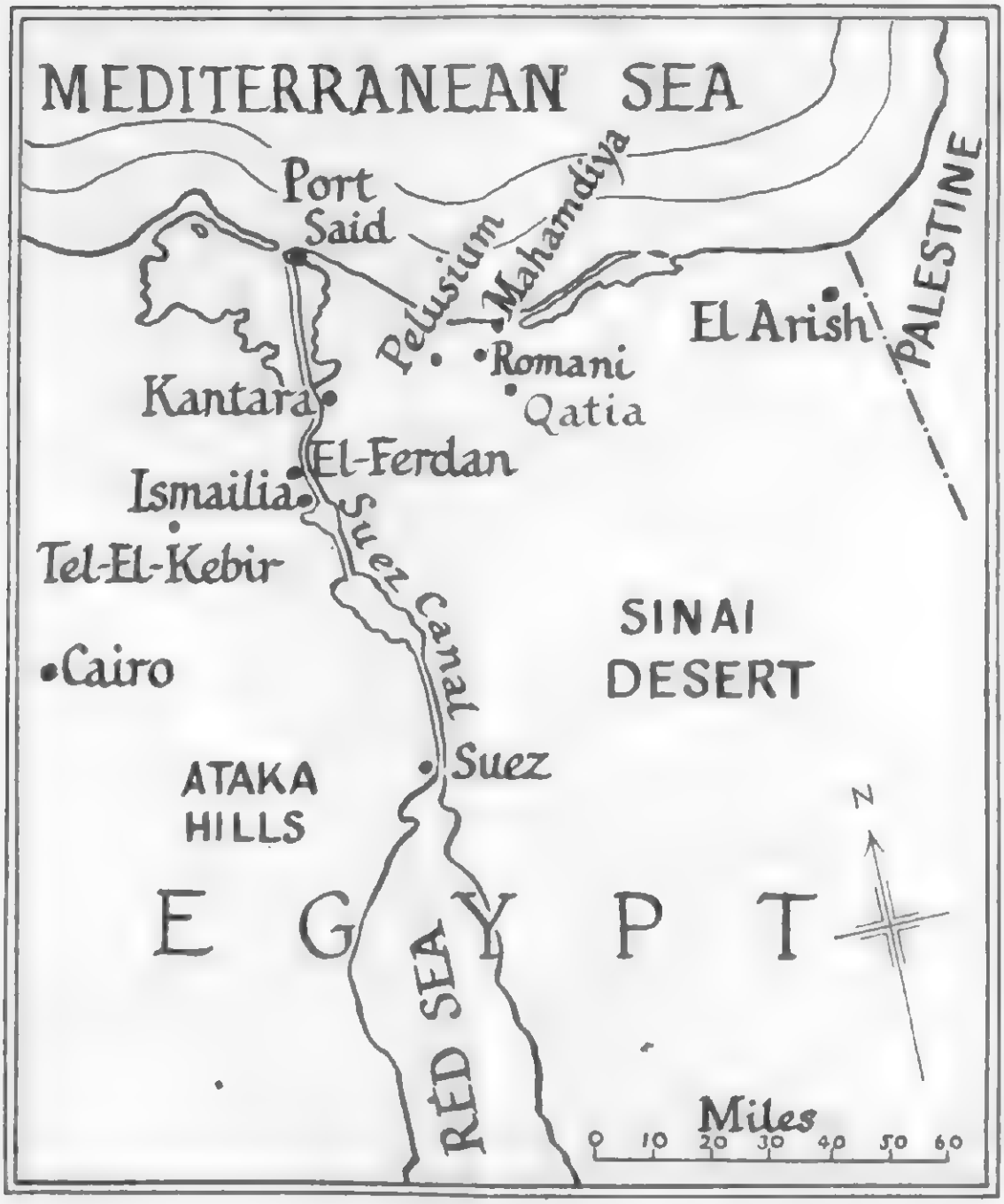

Ejelmer B.
Kidney Hill
Turshun Keui
Kavak Tepe
Tekke Tepe
Anafarta Sagar
Baka Baba
Cemetery
Windmills
Scimitar Hill
Chocolate Hill
Green Hill
Hills
Ismail Oglu Tepe
Hetman Chair
White House
Azmak Dere
Azina Dere
Susak Kuyu
Biyuk Anafarta
Cemetery
Plain

EGYPT AND SINAI MAP No. 8



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and was again used on outpost duty. Great hopes were aroused when the brigade moved to El Maadan, fifteen miles from El Arish, and it was announced that it would take part in a rapid advance and a surprise attack on the Turkish positions covering the latter place. Unfortunately, the troops were robbed of their prey as the Turks had decamped; and the brigade returned to El Mazar.

It was, however, to see its objective of El Arish as it moved thither by stages in the middle of January, 1917. This was the most easterly point reached by it, except for one company of the 1st/8th Battalion which accompanied a party of Royal Engineers to El Burj, ten miles beyond it. The units spent their time in training, with turns of outpost duty. Early in February, 1917, they moved by rail to Kantara, going thence on foot to El Ferdan, and on next day to Moascar, close to Ismailia. As they were rejoined at Kantara by the unfit men who had been formed into a temporary defence battalion, and as some of these lacked boots and had to march with puttees wrapped round their socks, it is not surprising that the numbers who fell out were higher than had been the case for many months past.

It was by now known that the rather dull existence to which the Territorial battalions had been condemned since leaving the Dardanelles was coming to an end and that they were destined for France. After farewell inspections by senior officers, including the Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Archibald Murray, they sailed for France towards the end of February. During the voyage, at 7.50 a.m. on 24th February, a torpedo was fired at the ship carrying the 1st/5th and 1st/6th Battalions: it passed between the stern and the log line and missed its target by about thirty yards.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EXPANSION OF THE ARMY

THE way in which the British Army expanded from its peace-time home strength of six Regular and fourteen Territorial divisions towards the Nation-in-Arms to which it might be likened at the end of the war was so haphazard, so "amateurish" and so "typically English" that it is hardly believable and mostly unknown. It is all the more right, therefore, that the story of the growth of the Lancashire Fusiliers from two Regular, two Special Reserve and four Territorial battalions to a total of thirty battalions, though all were not in existence at the same time, should be recorded. The paragraphs which follow deal only with those units of the Regiment which came into being after the outbreak of the war and cover the period of their inception and growth ; the parts played by most of them in various theatres of war are to be found in the later chapters of this volume and details of their movements in Chapter IV of Volume II.

2ND/5TH BATTALION

The nucleus of the battalion was the details of Home Service men left behind by the 5th Battalion (afterwards called the 1st/5th Battalion) when the latter sailed for Egypt on 9th September, 1914. The 2nd/5th may therefore be said to have been formed on that date, though its first Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel John Hall, V.D., who had relinquished command of the 5th Battalion in 1912, was not appointed until 25th September.

Recruiting began at Bury as soon as the battalion had an independent existence, men enlisting for foreign service, with a view to being sent out to the 1st/5th in due course, or for home service. The 2nd/5th was at that time called the "5th (Home Service) Battalion" and was a reserve, draft-finding unit. Recruits were drawn almost exclusively from Bury, Heywood and Radcliffe and from most of the industries and occupations in that area : they flocked in and the battalion was up to strength and had been divided into companies and partially provided with N.C.Os. before it moved into camp at Mossborough, near St. Helens, early in October, and from there to billets at Southport on 19th October, 1914.

But neither arms nor clothing were available for all for a considerable time, and for some weeks some men wore scarlet. Web equipment was issued in January, 1915 ; but it was not until April, 1915, that an official issue of "small kits," shirts, cardigan waist coats and underclothes was made to replace those of civilian pattern

provided by the East Lancashire Territorial Force Association. As regards arms, the battalion was at first provided with a Japanese rifle, filled with mineral jelly, not intended to be fired and of so complicated a mechanism that if any part of it was moved the whole thing tended to fly to pieces and had to be sent to the Ordnance Depot at Burscough. This was replaced by the long Lee-Enfield, which was not replaced in turn by the short Lee-Enfield until shortly before embarkation and *after* the men had fired their course, so that they went overseas with a weapon they had never used. Two machine guns were received for the first time at the same period, and even they were of Maxim-Nordenfeldt type and not the Regular Vickers Maxim.

The battalion was at first organized on the old eight-company system, but on 21st January, 1915, adopted the four-company organization. Its title at this time was 5th (Reserve) Battalion.

Training was carried out on the sands and on Birkdale Golf Course, where astonished spectators would see an entire battalion in little packets of eight—four men facing four men in close proximity—right down the length of the course. This was the 2nd 5th practising entraining, at which it became so expert that its rapidity in entering or leaving a train earned it much praise later. Route marches, of considerable length, took place at frequent intervals. Musketry practices were fired at Altcar. Musketry training was specialized under selected N.C.Os. as being a quicker way of putting men through the syllabus than leaving the task to (necessarily) partially trained company N.C.Os. The 2nd/5th claims to have initiated the system and to have proved its value: it is certainly true that the unit was selected for service overseas before others which adhered to the conventional methods. But then, John Hall was never conventional. He became famous in Southport for his unusual sayings; he was indefatigable and he paid great attention to detail.

Quite early the battalion, in common with the rest of the Home Service battalions of the East Lancashire Division, acquired a home defence role in addition to its draft-finding duties. In this capacity it had to find an officer's guard at the seaward end of the 1,460 yard long pier; as the sea approach to the pier was by a long, narrow and very tortuous channel between sand banks with its opening near Formby, it was never clear what useful purpose the guard served. In March, 1915, a third role was added, that of preparation for active service, with the rather natural result that the unit put this role first and, when it had to find drafts for the 1st/5th in Gallipoli, was apt to put its own interests first. At about this time the title of the unit was altered to "2nd 5th Battalion," the words "Home Service" and "Reserve" being dropped.

After several rumours of moves to Malvern and elsewhere, the battalion was selected to leave the 2nd/1st East Lancashire Division and to join the 1st 3rd Highland Brigade of the 1st/1st Highland Division. These were soon renamed 154th Infantry Brigade and

51st Division. The 2nd 5th accordingly left Southport for Bedford on 17th April, 1915, and became in effect a first-line unit, its draft-finding and second-line role being taken over by the 3rd/5th Battalion. It crossed to France on 3rd May, 1915, and continued in existence till 1919.

3RD/5TH BATTALION

When the battalion which eventually became known as the 2nd 5th moved from Bury to Mossborough, it left behind it some details which at first merged with the 5th Battalion Depot at the Drill Hall at Bury under Major P. G. Gow. A battalion organization came into being by the middle of October, 1914, with detachments at Radcliffe and Heywood. The men were billeted in Bury, Radcliffe and Heywood. Training was carried on over open country near these towns. Early in November a number of its N.C.Os. and men with previous experience were selected by Lieutenant-Colonel J. Hall, V.D., commanding the 5th (Home Service) Battalion, to join the latter unit at Southport.

Early in January, 1915, when the 5th (Home Service) Battalion was acquiring a more active role and was about to be renamed 2nd 5th, Major G. A. Kay relinquished the appointment of second-in-command to that unit and took command of the troops at Bury. It may be said that the 3rd 5th Battalion dates its existence properly from this period. It continued its training in the Bury district, though not up to strength, its role being that of reserve to the 2nd 5th Battalion. In April it was visited by Colonel A. A. Garstin, commander of the 2nd 1st Lancashire Fusiliers Brigade, who evidently came to see if it was fit to replace the 2nd/5th in his Brigade. He was satisfied.

The 2nd 5th left Southport for Bedford on 17th April, 1915, and several drafts were sent from the 3rd 5th in the last few weeks to bring it up to strength for going overseas and to replace the few men who were unfit or unwilling to go abroad.

After the 2nd 5th Battalion had left the 2nd/1st Lancashire Fusiliers Brigade, later renamed the 197th Brigade, the 3rd/5th took its place. It was at Crowborough for a while, but moved to Tunbridge Wells for the winter of 1915-16. At about this time Major-General C. J. Blomfield, C.B., D.S.O., Colonel of the Regiment, assumed command of the 2nd/1st East Lancashire Division (later the 66th Division).

In March, 1916, the division moved to Colchester, where the battalion remained until it left for France on 28th February, 1917. Just before going abroad the division was inspected by His Majesty King George V.

It should be placed on record that the 3rd 5th, after its inclusion in the 66th Division, was officially regarded as a second-line unit.

The battalion was disbanded on 13th February, 1918, on the reduction of the establishment of infantry brigades from four battalions to three.

2ND/6TH BATTALION

When the 6th (later 1st/6th) Battalion was embodied in August, 1914, some 300 men were unable for medical, family or business reasons to volunteer for foreign service. Captains E. Woolmer and G. Scott were therefore sent over to Rochdale from Turton, where the battalion was in camp, in order to raise more men. Fifteen hundred volunteered and the surplus not needed was left at the battalion depot at the Rochdale Drill Hall.

The 1st/6th Battalion left Turton for Egypt on 9th September, 1914. Just before this date, the details mentioned above moved into camp at Mossborough under Captain N. J. Laski. On 29th, September, 1914, Lieutenant-Colonel F. T. Prince, V.D.—whose Volunteer and Territorial service in the 4th Volunteer Battalion Manchester Regiment and in the East Lancashire Army Service Corps had extended from 1888 to 1913, when he was transferred to the Territorial Force Reserve and appointed to command the Manchester Brigade of the National Reserve -was appointed to command the details which by now had become the 6th (Reserve) Battalion.

Early in October the unit marched to Southport, where it lived in billets. The training of recruits continued at Rochdale, Todmorden and Middleton, those "passing out" being sent to Southport by rail on 12th November. The 6th (Reserve) Battalion went through much the same experiences and suffered very similar hardships to those of the 5th (Reserve) already described. Early in May, 1915, a third-line unit began to take shape at Rochdale and a nucleus of officers was sent to it from Southport On 19th May the battalion, by now called 2nd 6th, moved to Jarvis Brook, Crowborough, Sussex.

Although it trained with a view to going overseas as a complete formation, the division was compelled to sends drafts to Gallipoli, the 2nd/6th sending 7 officers and 100 other ranks to the 1st/6th in June, 1915.

Early in August the battalion spent a fortnight working on the second-line defences of London, near Maidstone, earning such a reputation that 6 officers and 250 other ranks were sent off in September for another turn of digging, this time at Brighton. On 20th October the brigade moved to billets in Tunbridge Wells for the winter.

In November Japanese rifles were withdrawn and long Lee-Enfield rifles and Lewis guns were issued to the battalion.

The winter of 1915-1916 was very severe and the battalion was occasionally lent to the local authorities to help in clearing the snow.

On 15th March, 1916, the battalion moved to Meeanee Barracks, Colchester, and became part of a mobile reserve in the event of invasion. It continued, however, to find drafts for the 1st 6th up to the end of July, 1916.

Great excitement occurred on Sunday, 14th September, 1916, when Zeppelin L-33, damaged by shell-fire after a raid over London,

had to land at Little Wigborough, about ten miles from Colchester. Its commander set it on fire and marched at the head of its crew towards Colchester. At the village post office he asked the post-mistress to telephone to the nearest garrison that he wished to surrender and that he would be grateful for protection against the civil population. (The casualties in London had been heavy.) A special constable arrived on the scene by accident and the Germans surrendered to him. Meanwhile an entire brigade had been sent off from Colchester to fling a wide cordon round the area, and everybody who could get away and find some means of conveyance had rushed to the neighbourhood. The crew were, however, bundled into lorries and dumped in the Colchester Detention Barracks before anybody was much the wiser. Early in the afternoon the disconsolate, lonely and doubtless somnolent orderly officer of the 2nd/6th was sitting in the officers' mess when the waiter showed in a staff officer from divisional headquarters and an officer in naval uniform. This turned out to be Lieutenant Ernst Shirlitz, of the Imperial German Navy, the second-in-command of L-33 and formerly Chief Navigating Officer of the Zeppelin Fleet. He was handed over for safe custody, to be treated like a British officer in close arrest. A quarter was got ready for him and not only were three stout bolts put on the door but six sentries, each with fifty rounds of live ammunition, were stationed round the quarter! The battalion was glad when he was removed elsewhere.

On 26th February, 1917, the battalion went overseas.

It was amalgamated on 20th February, 1918, with the 1st/6th Battalion when the establishment of infantry brigades was reduced from four battalions to three owing to the acute shortage of man power. The new battalion was called "6th Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers," and was further amalgamated with the 12th Battalion on 12th August, retaining its title for the reason that a Territorial Force battalion existing before the war could not be disbanded.

2ND/7TH BATTALION

As in the case of the 5th and 6th Battalions, the nucleus of the 7th (Reserve) Battalion was details left behind at the Drill Hall, Cross Lane, Salford, in August, 1914. It was soon increased by open recruiting, it being noteworthy that a large number of Salford Corporation employees, tramway drivers and guards and the like, joined very early. Recruiting was carried out in Salford, Pendleton and the surrounding districts. Somewhat later a large draft joined from Bury and Radcliffe; while at a later stage drafts came from Cheshire and Wales.

The first Commanding Officer was Lieutenant-Colonel A. J. Bailey. The moves and functions of the battalion were the same as those of the 2nd/6th Battalion. At Colchester it occupied Hyderabad Barracks, where it had the task of holding the commander of the Zeppelin L-3; already mentioned and of supplying the guard over its remains.

It went overseas in February, 1917. On 1st July, 1918, after being reduced to a mere handful by the heavy fighting of the "March Retreat," and being used as a cadre to train American units, the battalion was sent home to Aldershot, where on 9th July it ceased to exist as the 2nd/7th Battalion and became transmogrified into the 24th Battalion.

2ND/8TH BATTALION

The early history of the 2nd/8th Battalion is very similar to that of the 2nd/6th and 2nd/7th. It was formed at Mossborough on 20th September, 1914, from details of the 1st 8th, Colonel S. L. Mandleberg being appointed to command on that date.

It also marched to Southport on 13th October, 1914. It was made up to strength with untrained recruits straight from civil life, many of them tramwaymen and dock workers. All of these began their training in plain clothes, being later in some cases given blue or red uniforms and slouch hats.

Its moves were the same as those of the other battalions of the brigade. The home service men left the battalion about July, 1915, when it definitely became a second-line unit destined for active service. Even so, it had to send to the 1st 8th Battalion in Gallipoli a draft of several hundred men, who were replaced in part by men of an excellent type from Cumberland.

Like the 2nd 7th, it took such hard knocks during the "March Retreat" that it was reduced to cadre in April, 1918, and after helping to train American units was disbanded on 31st July, 1918.

9TH (SERVICE) BATTALION

This unit, the first of the "Kitchener" or New Army battalions of the Regiment, was formed at Bury on 31st August, 1914, largely from workers in cotton mills, coal-mines and large factories in and round Bury, Bolton and Manchester, but with a few Regular reservists and many with previous army experience amongst them.

Its first Commanding Officer was Lieutenant-Colonel J. V. F. Thorne, who early took the battalion to a hutted camp at Bolton Park, Grantham.

Up to November, 1914, men were still dressed in blue uniforms and had the old long Lee-Enfield rifle, though the new leather equipment and the short Lee-Enfield rifle were received that month. In the early summer of 1915 the battalion moved to Witley Camp, near Godalming in Surrey, and was hurriedly fitted out into khaki drill and sun helmets before embarking for the Dardanelles on 6th July, 1915. It did not, however, receive any special training to fit it for a landing and for fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula till it reached Imbros.

It was another victim of the reduction in the size of infantry brigades and was disbanded on 21st February, 1918.

10TH (SERVICE) BATTALION

The 10th Battalion was composed of recruits, largely from Bury, Preston, Wigan and the neighbouring districts, who enlisted immediately after war broke out, with a stiffening of a few reservists and a good many ex-soldiers of varied experience. Many were miners and railwaymen; all were of a high physical standard.

Major T. S. H. Wade, a serving Regular officer of the 1st Battalion with twenty-five years' experience which included the South African War and a period of attachment to the German forces in South-West Africa in 1905, happened to be on leave in England in August, 1914, and was selected for the command, which he assumed on 6th September, 1914. Lieutenant G. L. Torrens of the West India Regiment, was appointed adjutant; he was later to succeed Lieutenant-Colonel Wade in command on the latter's promotion to a brigade.

The battalion was billeted in Bury until 6th September, when it moved to Bovington Camp, near Wool in Dorset, where the first night was spent on the grass verge of the road, no tents or rations having arrived. Soon, however, better conditions prevailed; and the men settled down well, though the Regular conception of discipline, particularly as regards the time of return to camp at night, was slow of growth. On 30th November it moved to billets at Wimborne near chalk downs and pine woods which furnished an enjoyable variety of opportunities for training. On 20th April, 1915, it moved back to Bovington. It had by this time become part of the 52nd Infantry Brigade, 17th (Northern) Division.

This was a time of strenuous training, at first with a miscellaneous collection of old D.P. (drill purposes) weapons, for it was not until December, 1914, that a supply of Lee-Enfield magazine rifles of an old pattern became available. In March, 1915, a limited issue of modern service rifles was made, together with the new leather equipment with which service battalions were provided, in contrast to the web equipment given to the Territorial battalions. But the battalion was not complete in either arms or equipment till the eve of its departure to France.

The period spent in Dorset was one of alarms, of rumours of German raids or intended raids, of spy stories, of reports of strange lights and of sudden rousings of emergency companies and patrols to investigate them.

At the end of May, 1915, the battalion marched by stages to billets at Hursley, a few miles south-west of Winchester. Much time was spent on digging and field exercises, and detachments were sent in turn by rail to carry out field firing at Fovant on Salisbury Plain. In July, 1915, the division was put under orders for service overseas. Large numbers of men had had no leave since joining but could only be given such short leave that, in the case of many men of the battalion, a day was spent in travelling home, a day at home and a day in coming back.

On 15th July, 1915, the battalion crossed to France by Folkestone

and went almost at once into the line at Vierstraat, some three miles south-south-west of Ypres. It had a distinguished career in France and Flanders throughout the rest of the war and survived until the spring of 1919.

11TH (SERVICE) BATTALION

Most of the information which follows was supplied by Brigadier-General J. D. Crosbie, C.M.G., D.S.O., the second Commanding Officer of the 11th Battalion, and by Major E. Munday, who sent his contribution two hundred miles by lorry from Fort Rosebery, in Rhodesia, to the railway for carriage down country and dispatch home by air mail.

The 11th Battalion was raised from men for whom there were no vacancies in the 10th Battalion. They came largely from Burnley, Oldham, Bolton, Wigan, Preston and Blackburn, with a few men from South Wales. Some of them were weavers; but the majority were miners, whose ways were at first very different to those usually associated with the Army. When the men were packed off by train to Codford, in Wiltshire, without any uniform or real organization, under the Quartermaster, Lieutenant J. Bowyer, a great number of friends who had come to see them off thought they would like a holiday in the south and went too. The results were unfortunate, because these "supers" had, of course, not been attested; and, when they stayed on, their dependants at home got no separation allowance nor did they themselves get any pay to send to them. The only remedy of which the miners knew for grievances was the strike; and they refused to do any parades, asking "How could a man soldier well if his wife and children were starving at home?" The weavers went on strike the first time they were expected to wash their feet in hot water, which they never had done and never were going to—"Kaiser or no Kaiser." There were several other such "strikes," but the men were always very amicable and quickly saw reason when things were explained to them by such officers as there were.

For it was not until the men had been at Codford for some days that officers began to arrive, usually with little or no uniform or kit. One of the first to arrive was the first Commanding Officer, Brevet-Colonel A. B. Maxwell, a retired officer, formerly of the Manchester Regiment, who was gazetted on 24th September and arrived with a complete kit except for a cap. For the first few days he paraded in a lounge suit with field glasses slung over his shoulder until Munday arrived with no uniform except a cap which Colonel Maxwell commandeered! The officers came from all over the world and from all sorts of occupations and interests. They included a tea-planter from Travancore, a farmer from Kimberley, an architect from Hong Kong, a colonist from Vancouver and a Shell Transport Manager from China. Its cricket team was so formidable that at Aldershot it would only play against divisional teams and generally won. This is hardly surprising as it contained A. E. R. Gilligan, who

later captained England ; G. H. Cotterill, twelfth man for Cambridge University ; and A. N. Jewell, who played for the Gentlemen of South Africa.

The men were in no better plight as regards clothing, many having joined up in their mill clogs and clothes. These soon became very tattered and some men could not go on parade because their trousers were in rags. A consignment of old red jackets and striped trousers belonging to various regiments was sent, but these had not been fumigated before dispatch and were already occupied ! It was not till nearly the end of November that blue uniform arrived, which did enable some kind of smartness to be achieved. A grand bonfire of civilian caps celebrated the event. Khaki was not issued until February, 1915.

The battalion lived in tents at Codford while huts were being built, into which the men moved in November, though the officers' huts were not ready till the end of December. In January, 1915, the whole division was suffering so badly from cold and damp that it was moved into billets, the 11th Battalion finding itself at Boscombe, near Bournemouth.

In April, 1915, after a week's intensive training at Ringwood, the battalion moved to Hursley near Winchester, where the 10th Battalion was stationed shortly afterwards. The 11th Battalion's stay there was short as it moved to Malplaquet Barracks, Stanhope Lines, Aldershot, in July. Its discipline while in the Southern Command had been so good as to evoke a special reference in Command Orders. There were three cases of desertion in December, 1914, all of men who were trying to get to France as soon as possible ; one was killed in action and the other two were wounded.

The battalion continued to distinguish itself at Aldershot, where, although there were several Royal regiments represented, and in spite of many protests, it was selected for its smartness to furnish the King's Guard at the Royal Pavilion when His Majesty King George V was in residence. The protests would probably have been stronger if it had been known that one of the smartest sentries was "A" Company's really "hard case" who was taken out of his cell in the guard room to mount guard ! However, he came up to scratch and was greatly thrilled when he was spoken to while on sentry duty by Princess Mary (later the Princess Royal, Countess of Harewood). During his stay at Aldershot, the King inspected the battalion on Laffan's Plain, as did Lord Kitchener.

This last inspection was a sort of "passing-out examination," for shortly after, the battalion, in common with the rest of the 25th Division, was put under orders for France, to which it crossed on 25th September, 1915, the day of the Battle of Loos. It went almost at once into the front line at Le Touquet, near Armentières, where the 2nd Battalion had spent many months in the winter of 1914-1915.

In 1918, as will be told later, the battalion was involved first of all in the "March Retreat" near Bapaume, then in the fighting near

Hazebrouck, and finally in the disaster of the Chemin des Dames, on the Aisne, whither it had been sent for a rest. As a result it was shattered beyond all hope of rebuilding and was disbanded on 12th August, 1918, at Rouxmesnil Camp, near Dieppe.

12TH (SERVICE) BATTALION

This unit was formed in the Bury district in August and early September, 1914, chiefly from coal-miners and cotton operatives. It included a few ex-soldiers and former militiamen, but no Regular reservists. Lieutenant-Colonel E. J. P. F. Macartney Filgate, of the Militia of the Royal Irish Rifles, was appointed to command it, with Captain J. Bowring, an officer with experience of the South African War, as adjutant. All the other officers had served in the Officers Training Corps, while the N.C.Os. were drawn from those with previous service and from likely-looking men in the ranks.

Like so many other battalions, it had no uniforms for many weeks, and no arms for many months. Its first contact with the ideas of the war then being waged was the arrival (by mistake, it proved) in October, 1914, of Second-Lieutenant G. F. Page, aged twenty and with six weeks' active service in France, who was posted to it after being wounded with the 2nd Battalion during the Battle of the Aisne.

The 12th Battalion was then at Seaford, in Sussex, whence it moved into billets in Eastbourne for the winter, going back into huts at Seaford in the spring of 1915. By then it had been placed in the 65th Infantry Brigade of the 22nd Division. After a period at Aldershot, it went to France in September, 1915, taking over a sector on the River Somme. By then it had shaken down well as a team and made a good reputation for itself in trench warfare and particularly mining in the chalk.

In November, 1915, however, it was moved to Salonika, where it distinguished itself in the Macedonia campaign, as is told in Chapter XVI. In July, 1918, it was brought back to France on the reduction of the establishment of brigades in Macedonia from four battalions to three. It was amalgamated with the 6th Battalion, but had to lose its identity because that unit was in the Territorial Force at the outbreak of the war and could not therefore be disbanded.

13TH BATTALION

The 13th Battalion was a draft-finding unit, and is dealt with later in this chapter under the heading "The Reserve Battalions."

14TH BATTALION

Reference to this Battalion is necessarily on the lines of the famous chapter on "Snakes in Iceland" ("There are none"). For no 14th Battalion was ever raised although several officers were gazetted to it ; and the titles of the remaining new units of the Regiment were due to a mis-numbering of which no explanation is known.

The Salford Brigade Committee

The raising and equipping of the 15th, 16th, 19th, 20th and 21st Battalions by the Salford Brigade Committee are such a typical example of the two English characteristics of improvisation and voluntary effort that a short description of that body's activities should be included in this narrative.

The committee was formed in September, 1914, at the request of Mr. (later Sir) Montague Barlow, M.P., in order that the work of raising units in Salford might be as public and representative as possible ; it consisted at first of Mr. Barlow as chairman, Alderman Linsley, Councillor Higson, Mr. H. Roberts and Mr. G. Howarth, with Alderman I. Frankenberg as treasurer and Mr. G. C. Mandleberg as honorary secretary. At the outset it undertook, at the request of the War Office, to make all arrangements for raising, clothing, housing and feeding the troops. It even saw to their payment. The War Office allowed grants for uniform, clothing and kits amounting to £8 10s. 3½d. for each man, but the contracts were so well placed that the actual expenditure was only £7 17s. 7d. a head, with a total saving to Army funds of £4,032 12s. 1d. The committee's expenditure on camp construction, camp equipment, camp and office administration totalled £67,908 for the four active Salford battalions, with an additional sum of £3,556 for messing and billeting in the case of the 19th and 20th Battalions. When lack of field kitchens (which the Army authorities could not produce at once) was limiting the amount of time which the battalions could spend out of camp on the training areas, Sir George Agnew, Bart., M.P., Mr. C. C. Goodwin and Messrs. Mather & Platt, Ltd., each gave one through the committee. Mr. G. C. Mandleberg raised funds for a fourth ; and a fifth was presented jointly by the Irwell and Eastern Rubber Company, Charles Macintosh and Company, Richard Howarth and Company (half the contribution being paid by the employees) and Alderman I. Frankenberg.

But the committee's activities covered a wider field than merely filling the gaps which had to be left by the authorities. It decided to raise funds for certain expenses which the War Office could not, in those days, be expected to meet, at any rate in full—such as bands, additional medical appliances, dental outfits, sports gear, camp cinematograph and the like. A guarantee fund of about £1,200 was raised When its purpose had been fulfilled, the ultimate balance was transferred to the Salford Brigade Benevolent Fund, formed on the lines of the Regimental Compassionate Fund to meet cases of need among dependants for which no adequate government grant or pension was available. This last work provided the committee with scope for much useful work after its initial purpose of raising and administering the troops had been fulfilled.

The Salford Brigade maintained its own recruiting stations at Regent Road, Salford, at Pendleton Town Hall and in Eccles, Swinton and Walkden, which were handed over to the ordinary recruiting organization in August, 1915. A permanent depot for the

brigade was opened at 252, Chapel Street, Salford, and acted as a recruiting station for the Salford Brigade while Lord Derby's scheme was in force from October, 1915, to January, 1916. After the introduction of compulsory service, it continued to do valuable work as an office dealing with questions of pensions, allowances and other matters where an informed link between the military and civil spheres was much needed.

15th (Service) Battalion

The 15th Battalion had as sub-title "1st Salford," for it was the senior unit of the "Salford Brigade" which was raised largely through the energy of Mr. Montague Barlow, M.P., and the late Sir Charles Mandleberg. It was formed on 9th September, 1914. The first Commanding Officer was Colonel H. B. Moss, V.D., whose previous service had been in the Volunteers and the 8th Lancashire Fusiliers. The first adjutant was Captain C. M. Abercrombie, who left on 15th November, 1914, to raise and command the 16th Battalion.

By 28th December, 1914, the 15th was up to establishment and moved to Conway, in North Wales. In June, 1915, the battalion moved to Catterick Bridge in Yorkshire, but it had not finished with the seaside as it spent a fortnight at Whitley Bay in firing its first musketry course.

In August, 1915, it moved to Codford on the western edge of Salisbury Plain, where it became part of the 96th Infantry Brigade in the 32nd Division, going to France in November, 1915. It continued in existence until 24th October, 1919.

16th (Service) Battalion

The "2nd Salford Battalion," to give the 16th Battalion its sub-title, was raised on 5th November, 1914, three companies coming from Salford and one from Eccles. The first Commanding Officer was Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Abercrombie, who had up till then been adjutant of the 15th Battalion and who remained in command until November, 1917. It is hardly necessary to say that this unit, too, owed much to the energetic support of Mr. Montague Barlow, M.P.

The battalion trained in Salford until 11th February, 1915, when it moved to Morfa, near Conway in North Wales. On 20th June it moved to Catterick, in Yorkshire, and on 28th July to Ponteland, in Northumberland. Its next move was to Codford, in Wiltshire, on 5th August, 1915, when it joined the 96th Infantry Brigade, 32nd Division.

On 25th September, 1915, it received its first Lewis gun and on 20th October drew its service rifles. These events were rightly interpreted as portents of an early move into a war zone; for on 22nd November, 1915, it crossed to France. It continued in existence till the closing weeks of 1919, and was the last service battalion of the Regiment to be disbanded.

17TH AND 18TH (SERVICE) BATTALIONS

The 17th (1st South-East Lancashire) and 18th (2nd South-East Lancashire) Battalions were originally composed of bantams, that is men whose height was not less than 5 feet or more than 5 feet 3 inches. The raising of a bantam unit in the Regimental area was suggested by Sir Ryland Adkin, M.P., who obtained the consent of the War Office and formed a committee for this purpose, consisting of Sir F. Cawley, M.P.; Sir G. Toulmin, M.P.; Mr. T. C. Taylor, M.P.; the Mayors of Bury, Rochdale, Middleton and Heywood; the chairmen of the District Councils of Radcliffe, Ramsbottom, Whitefield and Wardle; the Rector of Bury (Rev. J. C. Hill); Colonels R. W. Deane, C. L. Robinson and G. E. Wike, D.L.; and Major B. Smyth, M.V.O. The committee named Colonel Wike, formerly Commanding Officer of the 5th Battalion and an indefatigable worker in all Regimental causes, as the official raiser; and recruiting began on 2nd January, 1915. Within five days the 17th Battalion had reached its full strength of 1,350 and had a surplus. War Office approval was given on 13th January for a second bantam battalion, the 18th, to be raised. It recruited up to establishment by 20th January.

The committee nominated Major W. J. McWhinnie (late Royal Irish Rifles) for the command of the 17th and Major R. A. Irvine, C.M.G. (then serving with the 13th Battalion), for that of the 18th Battalion.

As in the case of the Salford battalions, the administration of the units had to be undertaken by the committee which raised them. In this case, too, considerable savings were effected, thanks to the skill of Colonel Wike. The War Office allowance for clothing was £8 15s. a head, but he kept the cost below £8. Similarly the committee provided entrenching tools at a cost of 2s. 9d. each, although the War Office price was 3s. The duties of secretary to the committee were undertaken by Major Smyth, then Recruiting Officer at Bury, who also managed the whole of the financial business of the battalions until they were taken over by the War Office at the end of 1915.

At the outset both battalions were billeted in Bury, householders receiving the statutory payment of 3s. 4½d. a day. Eighty men lived in the Church House. On 16th March, 1915, the 17th Battalion moved to hutments at Chadderton, near Oldham. The 18th moved to hutments at Garswood Park, Ashton-in-Makerfield, on 8th April. They both took part in a review held by Lord Kitchener in Manchester on 21st March, the cost of the journeys (£75 17s. 7d.) being borne by the Manchester Recruiting Committee. During the summer they moved to Masham in Yorkshire, where they were brigaded with the 20th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers and the 23rd Battalion Manchester Regiment, in the 104th Infantry Brigade of the 35th (Bantam) Division. In August, 1915, the division moved to Tidworth, whence the 17th and 18th Battalions, after a cancelled order to prepare for Mesopotamia, crossed to France on 29th January, 1916.

In the event, it proved impossible to keep up a supply of reinforcements who were both small enough to be classed as bantams and yet of good enough physique for active service; and in the spring of 1917 all attempts to maintain the bantam character or title of the 35th Division and its units had to be abandoned. The 17th and 18th Battalions, however, retained their identity until they were disbanded in the spring of 1919.

19TH (SERVICE) BATTALION

The next battalion in numerical order was one of the "Salford Brigade"—the 19th (3rd Salford) Battalion. The official authority for its formation was dated 25th January, 1915, but the appointment of its first Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel (Brevet-Colonel) L. C. H. Stainforth, late Indian Army, was gazetted on 11th February.

Its actual origin was a curious one as its nucleus consisted of men of the 16th Battalion who missed the train when that unit left Salford for Conway. Major J. Ambrose Smith, who had been originally sent by the War Office to the 15th Battalion and later transferred to command a company in the 16th, was left behind in Salford with a list of these men and may be said to have begun the raising of the 19th. Like the other battalions of the brigade, it owed much to Mr. Barlow and the Salford Brigade Committee. With the help of Mr. Brade, the then Mayor of Eccles, an Eccles "Pals" Company was raised; and a committee at Swinton contributed a company from there.

At first the members of the unit lived and fed in their own homes, moving in turn to Conway, Catterick, Ponteland and Salisbury Plain with the other battalions of the brigade.

Luckier than some of the war-time battalions, it received its clothing and equipment within a month of its birth.

In August, 1915, Colonel Stainforth was succeeded in command by Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. A. Graham, D.S.O., who came from command of the 3rd Battalion King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment), after distinguished service in the Nile Expedition of 1897, the Sudan Campaign of 1898-99 (during which he was A.D.C. to Lord Kitchener) and in the South African War.

On its arrival on Salisbury Plain, the 19th found itself grouped with its seniors of the Salford brigade in the 96th Infantry Brigade, 32nd Division, with which it went to France on 21st November, 1915. Before leaving England it was inspected by Lord Derby and Lord Kitchener. On the last day of the year it was transferred to the 14th Infantry Brigade, which had been brought into the 32nd Division under a scheme by which a partial and mutual dilution of New Army units and formations by Regular equivalents was carried out in many parts of the B.E.F. It suffered even more violent change in August, 1916, when it was converted into a pioneer battalion and made part of the 49th (West Riding) Division, T.F.,

with which it remained (and saw some very strenuous actual fighting) up to the end of the war, being finally disbanded in June, 1919.

20TH (SERVICE) BATTALION

The "4th Salford Battalion" was the last of the active battalions to be raised by the indefatigable efforts of Mr. Barlow and the Salford Brigade Committee, though it was not destined to go overseas with the other three Salford units. It was linked with the 17th and 18th Battalions in that it was composed of bantams and for that reason was grouped with them in the 104th Infantry Brigade, 35th (Bantam) Division. Like the 19th Battalion, it contained an Eccles "Pals" Company and a Swinton contingent.

It was raised on 23rd March, 1915, the first Commanding Officer being Lieutenant-Colonel A. Reid, D.S.O., V.D. It remained at Salford until July, 1915, when (like the other Salford battalions before it) it moved to Conway. But it omitted Catterick from its itinerary and went straight to Park House Camp, Cholderton, near Tidworth on Salisbury Plain, where it trained until 29th January, 1916, when it crossed to France. During its move towards the line it was inspected by Lord Kitchener.

It was one of the victims of the reduction of the establishment of infantry brigades and was disbanded on 16th February, 1918.

21ST BATTALION

This was formed as a draft-finding unit for the Salford Brigade and is dealt with under "Reserve Battalions" later in this chapter.

22ND BATTALION

This was also a draft-finding unit and is referred to more fully under "Reserve Battalions."

23RD (SERVICE) BATTALION

After an interval of over three years during which no new battalions of the regiment had been formed, though several had disappeared, a new unit came into being which went through a chrysalis stage before becoming the 23rd Lancashire Fusiliers.

In May, 1918, several hundred men from eighty-three different regiments and units and of medical categories B and C, including many suffering from wounds, rheumatism and general debility, were collected at Habarcq, near Arras, and formed into the 4th Provisional Guard Battalion, under Lieutenant-Colonel G. Hesketh, D.S.O., T.D., of the 5th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, being allotted to the 59th Division. On 26th May it was renamed 23rd (Garrison) Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers, at Hesketh's suggestion. For some time it was employed in digging trenches around Habarcq.

It was transferred in June to the 121st Infantry Brigade in the 40th Division, to the surprise of some of its members who, having lost fingers and otherwise contributed physically to the war, did not

expect to be called upon for any further fighting. Its establishment of officers was never raised in proportion to its new status, so that it was denied its due share of promotion. In spite of its initial handicaps, it soon developed a wonderful *esprit de corps* ; and after its weakest members had been weeded out it became a unit fit enough to be inspected by Field-Marshals the Duke of Connaught and Sir Douglas Haig on 2nd July and to be classed as a fighting unit. The word "(Garrison)" was therefore dropped from its title ; and it took an active part in the closing events of the campaign in France and Flanders, being finally disbanded in April, 1919.

24TH BATTALION

As recorded earlier in this chapter, the 2nd/7th Battalion was reduced to cadre on 25th April, 1918, and returned to England on 3rd July, to be changed into the 24th Battalion. Practically nothing is known of the latter. But Mr. A. S. White, the War Office Librarian, personally carried out some research which showed that the 24th Battalion was a draft-finding unit, that it was stationed at Cromer in September, 1918, that it was even then being allowed to run down, and that it was finally disbanded about the end of that month.

The Reserve Battalions and the Depot

The national unpreparedness for war in 1914 was reflected in the sketchiness of the arrangements made for replacing casualties which occurred in units overseas; and it was not until well on into the war that a firm system was evolved. Later the uneven incidence of loss between units in the field made it impossible to link a draft-finding unit in the United Kingdom with any particular battalion overseas, or indeed to ensure that parties sent out by it went to a battalion of its own regiment. In spite of the discouragement which resulted from the knowledge that they were training reinforcements for an unknown and possibly "alien" destination, the reserve units of the Regiment, of whom a brief account follows, maintained throughout the war a very high standard of output.

3RD BATTALION

As has been mentioned in Chapter I, this unit belonged to the Special Reserve and was intended to furnish drafts to the Regular battalions. Mobilized with the latter on 4th August, 1914, it received 800 reservists surplus to the needs of the 2nd Battalion and, with its strength thus brought up to a total of about 1,200 all ranks, moved on 8th August, 1914, from Bury to Hull. After several moves in that district it settled down in November, 1916, at Thirtle Bridge, near Withernsea, on the south-east coast of Yorkshire, where it stayed till the end of the war, carrying out coast defence duties as well as finding drafts. Between the beginning of February, 1915, and the middle of May, 1917, the destinations of its drafts were as follows

1st Lancashire Fusiliers	2,028
2nd Lancashire Fusiliers	1,786
1st/5th Lancashire Fusiliers	50
1st/6th Lancashire Fusiliers	70
9th Lancashire Fusiliers	629
10th Lancashire Fusiliers	194
11th Lancashire Fusiliers	65
12th Lancashire Fusiliers	70
15th Lancashire Fusiliers	45
16th Lancashire Fusiliers	60
18th Lancashire Fusiliers	80
19th Lancashire Fusiliers	16
20th Lancashire Fusiliers	52
Royal Engineers, British Expeditionary Force	26
British Expeditionary Force (unit unknown)	2,655
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (unit unknown)	492

Between 23rd August, 1916, and 7th November, 1918, it sent a total of 15,229 other ranks overseas in drafts; while between 26th May, 1917, and 14th December, 1918, it sent out in all 698 officers. These figures include many of all ranks who went overseas again after coming home wounded or sick. Throughout the greater part of the war, the battalion was commanded by Colonel The Earl of Westmorland, A.D.C., who was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire for his valuable work in which he received loyal and much appreciated support from his Countess.

4TH BATTALION

A Special Reserve battalion, like the 3rd, the 4th Battalion moved from Bury to Barrow-in-Furness, in Lancashire, on 8th August, 1914, at a strength of 12 officers and 371 other ranks, and soon came under the command of Colonel J. Aspinall Turner, who remained with it until 11th June, 1918, when he was succeeded by Lieutenant-Colonel E. U. Bradbridge and was appointed Honorary Colonel of the unit. At first it was so fully occupied with guard duties at Vickers Armstrong's shipbuilding yards and with various garrison duties that little training was possible. Recruits arrived so fast and uniforms so slowly that out of a strength of 1,500 towards the end of August, 1914, only about 700 were in uniform. The work of the battalion staff was not made easier by the fact that parties of recruits arriving from Bury—in plain clothes, of course—often brought another 25 per cent. of "hangers-on" with them.

Soon after the Battle of Le Cateau, however, the strength of the 4th Battalion came down to more manageable proportions owing to the despatch overseas of a large draft, though it absorbed all its trained officers, N.C.Os. and men. Their loss as instructors was later made good by the return of officers from France; and realistic

training, including tours of several days in opposing trenches under active service conditions with raids, was soon well in hand.

In October, 1916, the battalion moved to Barry Docks in Glamorganshire, where it remained (with a detachment at Swansea during 1918) until it was "wound up" in February, 1919, being formally disembodied in June of that year, when it received an appreciative letter from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, then Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Great Britain, in which he said that the high standard of the drafts sent overseas by it, due to the hard work of all concerned, contributed materially to the splendid achievements of the battalions which fought under his command. One who was especially responsible for the good reputation of the battalion was Quartermaster and Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel A. W. Smith, whose forty-three years' service in the Regiment ended with twenty-one years as quartermaster of the 4th Battalion.

The drafts sent overseas by the battalion comprised the following :—

Year	*Officers*	*Other ranks*
1914-15	47	1,601
1916	60	1,383
1917	49	1,400
1918	115	1,735
Totals ...	271	6,119

5th Reserve Battalion

This unit came into being when the 3rd 5th Battalion became a fighting unit in the spring of 1915. Originally intended to find drafts for the 1st 5th, 2nd 5th and 3rd 5th Battalions and at first used for that purpose, thereby being assured of continued existence as an independent unit, it later sent reinforcements to man battalions within and without the Regiment, though no figures of its "output" are available.

Its early days were spent in billets at Southport in Lancashire. It moved at the end of 1915 to Codford in Wiltshire and thence to Witley in Surrey in the spring of 1916. After a few weeks near Oswestry, it went back to Southport again in the autumn of that year, moving to Ripon in January, and to the race-course at Scarborough in April of 1917. It remained there till the end of the war.

6th Reserve Battalion

This unit was the result of an amalgamation, which took place at Codford in the summer of 1916, of the 3rd 6th, 3rd/7th and 3rd/8th Battalions, these units having been formed in 1915 to find drafts for the first and second lines of the 6th, 7th and 8th Battalions. As in the case of the 5th Reserve Battalion, it eventually despatched drafts to many battalions and regiments. Like that battalion, it was stationed at Southport (where for a time it enjoyed the luxury

of having three regimental serjeant-majors on its books as a survival from the amalgamation), Ripon and Scarborough. While at the latter it had certain coast defence duties. With this task in addition to the training of recruits (many of them under 18 years of age), the despatch of reinforcements and the reception of all the officers and men invalided home from the six battalions it had been formed to feed, its staff and orderly room found their hands full, as did the officers' mess, which varied in strength from 30 to 100, often at the shortest notice.

In the spring of 1918 the battalion moved to Bridlington, where it remained until it was disembodied.

13TH BATTALION

This unit was formed as an offshoot of the 3rd Battalion at Hull on 5th December, 1914, and went the same day to Chesterfield, its subsequent moves being to Lichfield in April, 1915, to Rugeley in November, 1915, and to Brockton in Staffordshire in December, 1915. Between July, 1915, and March, 1916, it sent the following totals of reinforcements to the oversea destinations shown, though it is known to have sent drafts to other battalions also :—

1st Lancashire Fusiliers	200
1st/6th Lancashire Fusiliers	20
9th Lancashire Fusiliers	50
10th Lancashire Fusiliers	195
11th Lancashire Fusiliers	50
British Expeditionary Force	74
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force	106

As time went on its connexion with the Regiment became more and more merely nominal.

21ST BATTALION

When the first three Salford battalions (15th, 16th and 19th) were raised, a fifth ("E") company was added to each and was later left behind at Conway, in North Wales, when the battalions moved to Catterick. These "E" Companies were then grouped to form the 21st (Reserve) Battalion of the Regiment, with the role of finding drafts for the 15th, 16th and 19th Battalions, and was allowed to use "5th Salford" as its sub-title. At one time stationed at Prees Heath, in Shropshire, where in March, 1916, it had a strength of 1,059, it later became merged with the 72nd Training Reserve Battalion and lost its connexion with the Regiment.

22ND BATTALION

This was formed of men from various sources, to act as a draft-finding unit. Like the 21st Battalion, it was for a time at Prees Heath, where its strength in March, 1916, was 1,157. It transferred over 700 men to the 4th Battalion in August, 1917, after which no further link between it and the Regiment can be traced.

The Depot

In peace-time the Depot enlisted, clothed, trained and posted recruits for the Regular battalions of the Regiment. As we have seen, the functions of training and posting reinforcements were transferred after the outbreak of war to the various reserve battalions. But although in the rush of enthusiasm in 1914 many recruits had to be sent on to the reserve battalions in plain clothes, the Depot still retained the important functions of enlisting and clothing recruits and posting them to reserve battalions, until November, 1917, when it lost its recruiting duties to the Ministry of National Service.

Command of the Depot was assumed on 8th August, 1914, by Colonel R. W. Deane. He was succeeded in December, 1916, by Lieutenant-Colonel A. J. Mitchell, who continued his good work with great success. The post was no sinecure. The Depot remained a vital centre of regimental life and activity, particularly in connection with the feeding and clothing of all members of the Regiment who had the misfortune to be prisoners overseas, as is described in Chapter VI of Volume II.

Its population consisted of its own staff; the overflow from Command Depots; the Recruiting Staff; men sent for "hardening" after discharge from hospital; ex-prisoners of war; and recruits, of whom sometimes as many as 300 would arrive in a day. Its strength varied from 200 to 900, including in the later stages some 40 highly efficient and valued members of Queen Mary's Auxiliary Army Corps, commonly referred to as "W.A.A.C.s." The Recruiting Staff covered Bury, Salford, Rochdale and Radcliffe and was under the control of that indefatigable pillar of the Regiment, Major B. Smyth, M.V.O., who was created an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for his valuable services. To his eloquence and unrivalled presentation of the inspiring history of the Regiment the latter owed many a recruit who later helped to add to that history. The success achieved by him and his staff is attested by the figures: between 4th August, 1914, and 1st March, 1916, 10,615 voluntary recruits enlisted in the Regiment; and under the "Derby" (or Group) System, another 25,014 enrolled themselves; giving a grand total of 35,629 recruits before compulsory military service was enforced.

The Depot was the proud repository of many things of high regimental value, including the Colours of the 1st and 2nd Battalions.

CHAPTER IX

TRENCH WARFARE, 1915-1916

(Maps 1, 3, 4 and 9)

1st, 2nd, 2nd/5th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th Battalions

HITHERTO, the story of events in France has been simple and straightforward, in that the Regiment was represented by a single battalion whose doings could be followed continuously. But while the 2nd Battalion was struggling with the unexpected horrors of the Second Battle of Ypres in May, 1915, new battalions of the Regiment were beginning to arrive on the scene. On 3rd May, 1915, the 2nd/5th Battalion landed in France as part of the 154th Infantry Brigade, 51st Division, though transferred on 3rd January, 1916, to the 164th Brigade, 55th Division. In July came the 10th Battalion (52nd Infantry Brigade, 17th Division); in September the 11th Battalion (74th Infantry Brigade, 25th Division), and the 12th Battalion (65th Infantry Brigade, 22nd Division) soon to move to the Near East; in November the 15th, 16th and 19th Battalions (96th Infantry Brigade, 32nd Division, the 19th being transferred to 14th Infantry Brigade, 32nd Division, in December, 1915); and in January, 1916, the 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions (104th Infantry Brigade, 35th Division). The total was brought up to eleven battalions on the Western Front by the transfer of the 1st Battalion to France in March, 1916, as the result of the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula at the end of December, 1915. If, therefore, a clear sequence of dates is to be preserved, the narrative henceforth must skip from one unit to another and from one part of the line to another. This chapter deals with all the events of importance in which any battalion took part between the end of May, 1915, and the end of June, 1916, and brings the story up to the eve of the great Battle of the Somme, any incidents in June which were strictly preliminary to that battle being reserved for the next chapter. No battle honours were earned in this period, as no battalion took part in the Battle of Loos in September, 1915. Indeed, so much were most of the events about to be described part of the routine of trench warfare that the only ones to be mentioned in the Official History are the action at The Bluff in February, 1916 (10th Battalion), and the capture of "Crosbie Craters" on Vimy Ridge in May, 1916 (11th Battalion).

A Coda to the Second Battle of Ypres

Even the attack of the 11th Infantry Brigade at Pilckem, in which the 2nd Battalion was concerned between the 6th and 8th July, 1915, is not mentioned. Yet that battalion, in spite of the heavy losses described in Chapter IV and of a hope that it might have a rest from the Salient, was destined to incur further casualties to the extent of 17 officers and 380 other ranks before leaving that unhealthy area. The attack was undertaken at the bidding of Second Army Headquarters in order to improve the tactical situation on the left of the VI Corps line and to distract the enemy's attention from operations near Hooge. When the latter were cancelled, the local commanders represented that the projected attack had become futile and that it was bound to involve heavier casualties to the attackers than to the enemy. This prophecy was amply justified in the event but was overruled. 2ND BN.

Accordingly on the morning of 6th July, the 1st Rifle Brigade and the 1st Somerset Light Infantry, of the 11th Infantry Brigade, with the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers (lent to the 11th Brigade for the occasion) in reserve at Elverdinghe, attacked a stretch of German trenches east of the Yser Canal, south-west of Pilckem. The attack was very successful, thanks largely to one field gun being rafted over the canal and man-handled up to a position sixty yards from the German line from which it was able to blow in a sap-head which would have seriously held up any attack if left untouched. But the new line thus gained was overlooked by the German defences of Pilckem and the two forward battalions lost heavily from shell fire and were subjected to three attempted counter-attacks during the day. It was therefore decided to relieve the Rifle Brigade and Somerset Light Infantry on the night of 6th/7th July by the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, supported by two companies and two machine guns of the 1st Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The relief was carried out amid confusion, though fortunately the enemy refrained from shelling, and by 3 a.m. on 7th July the line had been taken over with "A" Company (Lieutenant W. Appleby) on the right, "D" Company (Captain J. Smythe) in the centre, "B" Company (Captain A. J. W. Blencowe) on the left, and "C" Company (Captain W. P. Salt) in support about fifty yards behind the original British front-line trenches. The French were on the battalion's left on the west side of the canal, the estimated length of front being about four hundred and fifty yards. Except for some bombing, the night of the relief was quiet; but about noon on the 7th heavy shelling began, followed by an attempted counter-attack on both flanks which was driven off. By an ill stroke of luck one shell hit the slit in the canal bank which had done duty unscathed for several weeks as battalion headquarters of previous units, and wounded Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Griffin, Captain A. H. Spooner (the adjutant), Lieutenant W. Appleby, Lieutenant F. Charleston (the machine-gun officer, who later died of his wounds) and a number of signallers and runners. This shell set alight a box of hand grenades and a very much more

serious disaster would have occurred if Spooner, although already wounded, had not picked them up and thrown them into the canal. He also remained at duty in command of the battalion until relieved about 3 p.m. by Major P. J. Foster of the Warwickshire. Shortly before 3 p.m. the enemy developed an intense shrapnel bombardment of our lines, and repeatedly attempted attacks on the centre of the battalion's front, but was beaten back each time. One sap was occupied by the Germans as well as by the Lancashire Fusiliers. Again and again during the battalion's four days in the line, the enemy sought to bomb our troops out of it. Again and again they were thrown back with the aid of the newly issued Mills bomb, in whose use no instruction had been given, so that as many casualties were caused by its faulty handling as by the enemy. Serjeant J. R. F. W. Penny, Serjeant A. Weatherall and Private J. Walker, under the leadership of Lieutenant G. C. Martin, particularly distinguished themselves by their gallantry and by their persistence in organizing fresh parties of bombers as new detachments, with more bombs, were sent up to replace casualties. Walker himself repulsed many attacks and held out till he was wounded. Penny, Weatherall and Walker received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for their exceptionally fine work; Walker was also awarded the French Croix de Guerre.

There were further indications of an impending general attack at 6 p.m. on 7th July, but it did not materialize though shelling continued intermittently throughout the evening and night—and the ghastly fight went on in the sap.

At 9.0 a.m. on 8th July the enemy were seen massing near the centre and at 10 a.m. they were observed advancing to the right of the battalion. In both cases their attack was stopped by artillery fire. Early in the afternoon a heavy bombardment came down, causing heavy casualties to the battalion and severe damage to its trenches and forcing battalion headquarters to move to the west side of the canal. But when the enemy tried to attack, the defenders were still ready for them and drove them back yet once again with artillery, rifle and machine-gun fire.

The casualties had, however, been so heavy that at 9.30 p.m. that night "B" and "D" Companies had to be relieved by two companies of the 1st Hampshire Regiment and moved back to a farm near Elverdinghe, where they undertook guards on the roads and liaison with the French. On the following night "A" and "C" Companies and the Hampshire companies were relieved by a Territorial battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment. The battalion marched to Proven, where the troops already billeted there spontaneously turned out and paid it the unique compliment of presenting arms to it in recognition of its fine defence.

The Initiation of the New Battalions

The next few months were, for the 2nd Battalion, a time of welcome relaxation in the routine of trench warfare; for the newly-formed units they were a time of instruction and becoming used to utterly strange conditions of which none had dreamt a year before. But, for all, the circumstances were very much the same: in the line, uncomfortable trenches, nightly patrols, insufficient ammunition and stores, insufficient and often obsolete artillery, and every week some casualties; out of the line, training, occasional shelling and very occasionally one or two bombs from enemy aircraft. Even so, there were several incidents which should be recorded.

10TH BN

The distinction of earning the first decorations awarded to a war-time battalion of the Regiment in France fell to Company Serjeant-Major J. H. Rogers and Serjeant E. Baker, of the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel T. S. H. Wade). On the night of 11th/12th August, 1915, Major Hugh Speke (who had been curate of St. Michael's, Bromley-by-Bow, vicar of Curry Rivel, Somerset, and a missionary in Southern Alberta and Athabasca before the war) went with Baker on patrol towards the German lines near Vierstraat, a few miles south-west of Ypres. The patrol stayed out about an hour and a half and obtained some very useful information. But on its way back Speke was killed by several shots through the head and his body became entangled in the barbed wire. On their own initiative, Rogers and Baker sent for wire-cutters, waiting for them half an hour under fire, released his body and carried it back across two lines of barbed wire, still under considerable fire. For this gallant proof of their devotion to a much-loved officer, Rogers and Baker were awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. During the whole of this period the casualties were unexpectedly high both in the front line and in the reserve trenches. An unfortunate incident which befell "A" Company on 5th September created something of a sensation at the time. A party of another regiment marching along a skyline drew the enemy's artillery fire on to a barn where two platoons were quartered, with the result that 14 men were killed, 6 mortally wounded and 27 wounded by a single shell which fell among them.

10TH BN

Though no battalion of the Regiment fought in the Battle of Loos on 25th September, 1915, the 10th Battalion took an indirect part in it. Early that morning a demonstration took place on a wide front in the Ypres area with the intention of playing upon the fears of the enemy and, by leading him to expect an attack there as well as at Loos, of inducing him not to move his reserves in the latter direction, at any rate for some hours. Trusses of straw were placed in front of the front-line trenches and, at the time fixed, were lit, the smoke being intended to imitate the clouds of gas which were being released at Loos, while a heavy artillery and small-arms fire was kept up in bursts as if an assault was impending. Unfortunately, as at Loos itself, the wind developed a perverse sense of humour and, veering just after the straw had caught well alight,

drove thick clouds of suffocating smoke into the British lines. A number of men suffered badly from it; but it is some consolation to be able to record that phosphorous bombs were thrown into the enemy trenches by catapult batteries and that, according to the battalion War Diary, the artillery bombardment met with some success.

11th Bn. On the night of 9th/10th December, a minor operation, planned by the 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. D. Crosbie) and postponed from the previous night because of bad weather, took place but met with no success through sheer bad luck. It was intended to enter the German trenches close to the Warneton railway to the north of Le Touquet (where the 2nd Battalion spent so many very wet months in the winter of 1914-1915), in order to destroy a suspected sap or mine-shaft, obtain prisoners for identification and generally damage the morale of the defenders. Very careful reconnaissances by Second-Lieutenants A. M. Stephens and R. F. MacKinnon and detailed preparations, including provision for artillery support, had been made for the operation, which was entrusted to Captain M. A. Ward, these two officers and thirty selected men. A place of entry was chosen which gave the best possibilities of effecting surprise. Unfortunately, rain poured down for eighteen hours before the expedition set forth; and when Lance-Corporals W. Keating and J. Beddows, who were detailed to cut a way through the German wire for the raiding party, reached the point chosen, they found such a large lodgment of water that wire-cutting in silence would have been impossible. Showing praiseworthy initiative, they forthwith reconnoitred the wire on each side and finally chose a spot in the bend of the German trenches about ten yards away. Here they set to work on a belt of wire about ten feet deep, consisting of apron wire mixed with trip wire about a foot high and fixed to a jumble of "knife rests" about three yards deep. The wire was hard and very brittle and cutting was laborious and slow, although Keating was by trade a wire drawer. However, eventually an alley about four feet wide was cleared through one row of "knife rests" and work was begun on the second. Passing through the leg of a "knife rest" was found a thin, plain, steel wire which was taut, evidently under a strain. With great difficulty Keating cut it while Beddows gripped it. But no sooner was it severed than it slipped through Beddows's fingers, now almost numb as the result of over two hours' work in cold and wet. It must have been attached to some alarm device in the trench, barely twelve feet away; for much bustle and chatter were at once heard, heads popped up, and rifle and machine-gun fire was opened. Beddows and Keating could only lie quiet. After about twenty minutes they began work again, but almost immediately they became aware of a German patrol of about ten men working towards them. A party of three grenadiers lying in a crater in No Man's Land, ready to cover the advance of the raiding party into the German trench, saw this patrol; but as they were outnumbered and feared that fighting at

this stage might ruin the whole operation and as their orders were to avoid engagements with the enemy except in unavoidable self-defence, they retired and reported the situation. After waiting in vain to see if the enemy's alertness and activity would die down, Lieutenant-Colonel Crosbie decided that, as surprise was no longer possible, the operation should be cancelled, a decision in which he was afterwards supported by his superior commanders. So Beddows and Keating came back, having been out in the open for three hours and twenty minutes, of which at least forty minutes had been under fire. They were awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Serjeant A. Smith, 16th Battalion, earned a Military Medal on 19th December at La Boisselle by rescuing four men after a mine explosion and by making a gallant effort to bring in a wounded man. He went out under heavy fire more than once, the last time with a rope attached to him so as to drag the man in. The latter unfortunately proved to be dead by then and could not be moved. Smith went out on the following night with another man and covered up the body. 10TH BN.

Two days later the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel T. S. H. Wade) met with better fortune in a bombing raid carried out opposite Hooge in conjunction with the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers. At 4 a.m. on 21st December the battalion grenadiers, under Lieutenant G. W. Thacker, moved close to the German lines and threw about a hundred bombs, working inwards towards a similar party of the Northumberland Fusiliers who were applying the same kind of treatment from the other flank. The enemy trench seemed to be full at the time and there were indications that many casualties were caused. German retaliation was feeble, consisting only of a few bombs and rifle shots. The party withdrew, with the loss of one man wounded, under cover of fifty rounds of rapid shrapnel fire sent over in the hope of catching the Germans still standing-to on account of the raid. 10TH BN.

The next venture of the 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. D. Crosbie) was more successful than that of 8th/9th December, but even so was robbed of its full due through no fault of its own. The scene was practically the same as that of its previous raid, namely the crossing of the Le Touquet–Warneton railway over the Le Touquet–Le Gheer road. The plan was for two parties, "A" and "B," self-contained and independent but synchronized, to enter the German trenches on each side of the level crossing, while a third party made a feint with bombs so as to distract the enemy. "A" party, on the left, under Second-Lieutenant R. F. MacKinnon, accompanied by an officer and seven men of the Royal Engineers and carrying two Bangalore torpedoes, and by Private Glover with a telephone, crawled out at 9.5 p.m. on 28th December and made their way to a ditch which ran across No Man's Land. But as soon as they had got so far, heavy machine-gun and rifle fire was heard some distance away to the right, which had the effect of rousing the enemy's suspicions all along the line that something was afoot. The 11TH BN.

party had, therefore, to lie in pools of water till quiet was restored, when they advanced towards the German trenches on a compass bearing and, in spite of delays caused by flares, got within twenty yards of the enemy line without being discovered. But another furious burst of German fire was heard in the same quarter as before, whereupon bombs began to be thrown near the party, followed by machine-gun fire which swept No Man's Land and by artillery fire on the British trenches which was so severe that Lieutenant-Colonel Crosbie, who had refrained from calling for retaliation in the hope that the enemy's fire would die down and the operation would be able to proceed, finally had to appeal to some six batteries of field and heavy artillery to suppress the nuisance. In the meanwhile, MacKinnon's party had been compelled to seek cover in the wet ditch once more, and, the torpedoes getting wet and wire-cutting being made impossible, this part of the enterprise had to be abandoned.

"B" party, on the right, under Lieutenant H. H. Fowkes and Second-Lieutenant A. M. Stephens, fared better. Their wire-cutting had been previously carried out by artillery, so that when the party left its trenches at 9.15 p.m. it had a fairly clear road before it ; and when at 9.40 p.m. the heavy German fire which had started the difficulties of "A" party was heard, Fowkes rushed straight for the German trenches. He found sunken wire in a trench about four feet deep, but this was easily crossed by means of traversor mats. Fowkes, with Corporal A. Grindrod, Lance-Corporal White and Private G. Singleton, outstripped the rest of the party and lay on the top of the German parapet, Fowkes signalling back with an electric torch to guide Stephens and the others through the gap in the wire. Fowkes and Stephens then jumped into the enemy trench and led their parties to their work. Stephens, with Serjeant T. A. O'Hara as his second-in-command, worked to the right for fifty yards. Finding the trench blocked with wire, he climbed on to the parados and, seeing considerable fire coming from a support trench about twenty-five yards away, led his party across the open, partly by crawling, to a position from which they were able to throw some eighty bombs. There were vocal indications that casualties had been caused, but further progress was prevented by a tangled mass of wire. Retaliation was erratic but, as enemy bombing began from a reserve trench and a man was wounded, Stephens deemed it time to withdraw, which he did without further loss. In the meanwhile, Fowkes had led his party to the left, towards a spot some twenty yards away where Germans were heard shouting. Bombs were exchanged and Singleton was wounded in the face and left eye ; he refused all help and made his own way back towards the British lines until he collapsed and had to be helped in by Lance-Corporal White. Fowkes's grenadiers bombed the Germans back and followed them fast ; but the enemy disappeared. The party followed down a communication trench, but after fifteen yards was held up by a block. Fowkes then left a blocking party at this point, took the remainder down the fire

trench until he reached another communication trench down which he led them for about sixty yards without meeting the enemy. He would have carried the pursuit further had he not at this moment received word that Stephens's party was withdrawing; whereupon he led his own detachment back with the loss of two men wounded. The whole operation was covered by a supporting party which remained outside the German trench under Second-Lieutenant E. H. Jewell who, seeing that some men of one of the assaulting parties had lost their way, went forward, led them into the trench and then returned to his own task. An unusual feature of the enterprise, and one which aroused considerable interest in higher circles, was the use of two searchlights of 105th Field Company, Royal Engineers, directed outwards on the outer flanks of the whole scene of attack, to cover the advance and withdrawal of the assaulting parties by blinding the enemy and misleading him as to the direction of the advance. Opinions differed as to the value of this ingenious device. For this raid, the Military Cross was awarded to Lieutenant H. H. Fowkes and Second-Lieutenant R. F. MacKinnon, and the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Serjeant T. A. O'Hara, Corporal A. Grindrod and Private G. Singleton. The name of Second-Lieutenant A. M. Stephens was also forwarded for a reward; but he was unfortunately shot in the head on the very next night while going to the help of a wounded man during a patrol undertaken with a view to a further raid, and died in the field ambulance a few hours later.

This was the last event of regimental importance in the year 1915, during the last fortnight of which General Sir Douglas Haig replaced Field-Marshal Sir John French as Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force.

On the night of 7th-8th January, 1916, the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula was finished.

If hitherto the Regular and New Army battalions have held the stage in Flanders, the rise of the curtain on 1916 displayed the 2nd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. J. Shirley, C.M.G.) in action, the first Second Line Territorial Force unit of any regiment to go to France, the first to go into action on any front and the only one to win three Victoria Crosses. As a farewell performance to the 51st (Highland) Division, which it left on 3rd January, and as a kind of "provincial appearance" before joining the 55th (West Lancashire) Division as it did on that day, this battalion carried out a raid early on 1st January, 1916, at St. Pierre Divion, on the River Ancre between Beaumont-Hamel and Thiepval, both of which were destined to see much heavy fighting by other battalions of the Regiment during the Battle of the Somme. Three parties of five men each, under Captain L. H. Bloy, Lieutenant W. Duckworth and Second-Lieutenant H. M. Ainscow, were to enter the enemy's trenches, inflict as much loss on him as possible and take a prisoner for the sake of an identification. If no way through the wire could be found, they were to bomb any sentry posts which they could

2ND/5TH BN.

locate by sight or sound. Two covering parties, of ten and eleven men under Second-Lieutenant M. P. Evans and Second-Lieutenant E. H. Fryer, were to reconnoitre the Thiepval–Hamel road in order to make sure that the way was clear for the bombing parties and then to protect the flanks. These scouting parties went out at 2.30 a.m. and by 4.30 a.m. had finished their reconnaissance and reported back by telephone that all was clear. The bombers then went forward. Ainscow's party, on the left, reached the German wire at 4.50 a.m. and then met and attacked a patrol which was coming out. Bloy threw a bomb and several of the enemy were hit. All three parties then found that the wire was too thick to get through and so set to work to bomb sentry posts, which were spotted with the help of the enemy's own flares. Sounds of distress showed that the aim of the bomb throwers had been accurate. The parties then withdrew under cover of the flanking detachments, the only casualty being a slight wound to Ainscow's hand. Serjeant W. Cadden was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his work on this occasion.

19TH BN. On 14th January, 1916, the 19th Battalion took over a section of trenches at Thiepval, close to the scene of this raid, in which (the War Diary notes) a cow was handed over as trench stores ! On 17th January the battalion received a visit in the line from Mr. (later Sir) Montague Barlow, M.P., who thereby showed that his interest in the Salford Brigade, which he had done so much to recruit, followed it wherever it might be.

The Action at The Bluff

10TH BN. Across the south-eastern face of Ypres, a ridge runs from north-east to south-west, of an average height of about one hundred and sixty feet above sea-level, the latter being the level of the greater part of Flanders. The northern end of this ridge lies near Passchendaele, the south-western at the prominent features of Wytschaete, Messines and the Kemmel group of hills. Where it comes closest to the town of Ypres, that is about two and a half miles south-east of it, it is cut at Hill 60 by the Ypres–Comines railway and, three-quarters of a mile south-west of that famous spot, by the Ypres–Comines canal, which at this point was about forty yards wide, full of water and crossed by footbridges at very rare intervals. The spoil from the cutting by which the canal makes its way through the ridge had been thrown up on each bank into terraces. On the north bank these terraces ended suddenly, just inside the line held by the British at the beginning of 1916, in an irregularly shaped and artificial eminence standing about thirty feet above the level of the natural ground. This feature was known as "The Bluff" and gave the British some of the best observation to be had in the whole of the Ypres Salient. It was therefore highly unpopular with the Germans, who had tried to destroy its advantages by exploding mines under its eastern face, but had only succeeded in thereby raising its height and so improving the British observation. And when orders were issued by the enemy Higher Command that efforts were to be made

everywhere to make demonstrations in February, 1916, in order to divert attention from the gigantic attacks on Verdun which began on 21st February, and that, if possible, such efforts should improve the line, it is not surprising that the local commanders should have decided without much hesitation that an attack on The Bluff would meet all requirements. The task was entrusted to the 124th Regiment of the 27th (Würtemberg) Division commanded by General Count von Pfeil und Klein-Ellguth.

Opposite this formidable array the line was held by the 17th Division, in whose 52nd Infantry Brigade was the 10th Battalion. The 52nd Brigade was responsible for the sector immediately south of the canal and also for both banks of the canal itself. The left battalion of the brigade consequently had one platoon on The Bluff, isolated from the rest of the unit and with no means of crossing the canal except a plank footbridge about three-quarters of a mile behind the front line. On 6th February, 1916, the left sector of the 52nd Brigade was taken over by the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel T. S. H. Wade), with three companies in the line south of the canal and "C" (Captain B. C. Winser) in reserve at battalion headquarters, which were at a spoil bank on the south of the canal close to the footbridge. "C" Company found the platoon which garrisoned The Bluff, commanded by Second-Lieutenant T. C. Walker, with Serjeant Hickenbottom as his platoon serjeant. The trench held by this platoon was known as New Year Trench; and from it a tunnel ran under The Bluff to the trenches of the 51st Brigade on the left, occupied at this time by the 10th Sherwood Foresters, with two companies of 7th Lincolnshire Regiment in support.

The first few days of the battalion's tour were uneventful except for intermittent enemy shelling of The Bluff and the 51st Brigade line with heavy high-explosive shells and trench-mortar bombs, which turned out to be a very accurate registration of the British front line at the point chosen for attack. But at 3.30 p.m. on 14th February, while preparations were being made for an inter-brigade relief and when the bombers and machine-gunners of the incoming brigade were already in the line, the Germans opened a continuous and heavy bombardment on both sides of the canal which, thanks to their registration, completely flattened the parapet of the front-line trenches over a wide area. Two platoons of "C" Company were sent up to the sector held by "A" Company south of the canal owing to a false report that half the company had been killed and its commander, Captain A. H. Thomas, and Second-Lieutenant M. J. H. Drummond were missing. These platoons were sent back to battalion headquarters later in the evening. Between 5.30 and 6.0 p.m. several explosions were heard and felt at battalion headquarters, which proved to be the blowing of several mines. One of these was at The Bluff, where Walker had put all his platoon, except himself and the sentries, in the tunnel for protection during the bombardment. The explosion blew in parts of the tunnel, and the majority of the

platoon were imprisoned and afterwards captured by the Germans. Walker himself and the sentries were killed and consequently the enemy was able to walk into New Year Trench without opposition and without anybody knowing that anything was amiss until Serjeant Hickenbottom arrived at battalion headquarters shortly after 6 p.m. with news of the fate of Walker and the platoon and of the virtual emptiness of New Year Trench, but ignorant of the German advance. Lieutenant-Colonel Wade at once ordered Winser, the only officer left with "C" Company, to take the remaining platoon of the company and reinforce New Year Trench. Winser took the platoon along the embankment north of the canal and seems to have outstripped the bulk of it, to have met the enemy in the trench, charged them without a moment's hesitation and been killed. Company Serjeant-Major R. Toms, who was accompanying the platoon, took command of it, established a firing line in a support trench about fifty yards behind New Year Trench, and went back to report to the Commanding Officer. Owing to hostile shelling, he did not arrive until 8.15 p.m., when Lieutenant-Colonel Wade sent Second-Lieutenant G. H. Bache, the battalion bombing officer, with the bombers and the two platoons of "C" Company which had been sent up to "A" Company, to reinforce the remains of "C" Company on the north bank of the canal. He ordered up a detachment of the 7th York and Lancaster Regiment (Pioneers), which he took the responsibility of commandeering in the hope that a prompt counter-attack might drive the enemy out. He also sent up four guns of the 50th Machine-Gun Company, which had just arrived, and Lieutenant Higgins of the Trench-Mortar Battery. Finally, he directed his second-in-command, Major G. L. Torrens, to take command of the operation. Crossing the canal, Torrens first went to the headquarters of the 10th Sherwood Foresters in order to find out the situation as they knew it; it appeared that the enemy, in addition to seizing The Bluff, had gained possession of about six hundred yards of the 51st Brigade's front line. He then went forward to reconnoitre. After going about two hundred yards he met Bache, who had with him about thirty men of various units, including his own bombers. Together they watched the Germans busily at work strengthening their newly-won position, while the neighbourhood of The Bluff was being heavily treated by artillery, trench mortars and machine guns. At 1.30 a.m. Torrens ordered up the York and Lancaster company and organized some sort of firing line right across the artificial ridge and about fifty yards from the enemy. But, deeming that his eighty-odd men were quite insufficient for his task, he went back to battalion headquarters to report the situation to Lieutenant-Colonel Wade. The latter was ordered by 52nd Brigade to launch a counter-attack at 3.30 a.m. with artillery support and the aid of the bombers of the 6th Dorsetshire Regiment and two companies of a Yorkshire battalion, both of 50th Brigade. The bombers had already arrived and Torrens took them and fifteen N.C.Os. and men of the 10th Battalion across the canal. The Yorkshire companies were delayed.

Torrens waited for them until nearly 4 a.m.; and then, realizing that he must attack before dawn if he was to have any chance of success, he borrowed twenty men of the 7th Border Regiment on his left and launched his attack at 4.15 a.m. in three portions—the York and Lancaster company on the right, the Lancashire Fusiliers under Bache in the centre and the bomber party on the left. The right party was soon held up and Torrens led forward such reinforcements as he could find, while the remainder worked their way on, fighting hard. The three parties reached the top of The Bluff and bombed the enemy in New Year Trench. Some men even succeeded in getting into the trench; and hand-to-hand fighting followed for nearly three-quarters of an hour. But the enemy's numbers were too great and the attackers were compelled to fall back, pursued by bombs and machine-gun fire, Bache being killed at about this time. It was by now evident that the enemy had dug himself well in; and, as the difficulties of the attackers were increased considerably by a heavy fall of snow—a hurricane raged later in the day and broke many telephone wires—, it was decided that any further counter-attacks on the piece-meal scale hitherto attempted would be futile. Torrens therefore withdrew to a position near New Year Trench and held it throughout the day, the garrison in this area consisting by this time of a mixture of men from almost every battalion in the Division. The trenches in which the troops had to hold on were part of an old unfinished second-line system and afforded very little cover.

During 15th February various reinforcements of other regiments arrived to strengthen the line north of the canal; and late in the day the 6th Dorsetshire came up with orders to attack at 9 p.m. This, however, was made impossible by an enemy barrage, and the attack was put off until 3 a.m. on 16th, when "A" Company (Captain A. H. Thomas) of the 10th Battalion co-operated with rifle fire from their trenches south of the canal, which were officially supposed to be untenable if The Bluff was taken, but which the fifty-odd survivors of this company showed no inclination to evacuate. Though the Dorsetshire succeeded in entering the trenches held by the Germans, they were unable to maintain themselves there. Indeed it took six battalions, carefully rehearsed and supported by ample and ingeniously used artillery, to recapture the lost ground on 2nd March, 1916. The 123rd Grenadier Regiment, which held the German line on that date, was never forgiven by the 124th Regiment which had taken it, and relations between them remained cool right through the war!

On the afternoon of 15th February the inter-brigade boundary was altered so that the 10th Battalion ceased to be responsible for any ground north of the canal. During the night of 16th/17th, "D" Company on the right was relieved by a company of the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers and in its turn relieved "A" Company just south of the canal; both companies, though not attacked, had suffered severely from constant bombardments and were nearly as exhausted as the remnants of "C" Company. On the night of

17th 18th the whole battalion was relieved and went back to Reninghelst for a rest, during which it found numerous carrying and working parties in connexion with the preparations for the recapture of The Bluff. For this operation Major G. L. Torrens was later awarded the Distinguished Service Order; he, Captain A. H. Thomas and Captain B. C. Winser were mentioned in despatches; and Military Medals were awarded to Serjeant H. Nolan, Serjeant S. Brown, Serjeant J. Routledge and Private J. Pollard.

A Period of Routine and Raids

2ND BN The day after the 10th Battalion had left The Bluff and doubtless as part of the diversions from Verdun already mentioned, the Germans raided the 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. B. Freeth), which had left the Ypres Salient at the end of July, 1915, and from then till the end of the year had been in and out of the line near Auchonvillers, close to the River Ancre, except for a few weeks behind the line with the 36th Division. At the beginning of February, 1916, it had returned to the Ancre and took its turn in the line at Serre. Just before it went back to the line it was visited by the Colonel of the Regiment, Major-General C. J. Blomfield, C.B., D.S.O. The trenches in front of Serre were in such a wretched state, aggravated by German artillery and "minnies" (short for minen-werfer shells, a noxious kind of trench-mortar bomb), that, instead of a continuous front line, the battalion held thirteen small posts. Some of these were linked up, others were not, and one or two were completely isolated by day. All attempts to make communication trenches were frustrated by the wet or by the enemy's missiles, both of which broke in the sides of anything dug. For some time up to 18th February, German "frightfulness" had been increasing and casualties were abnormally heavy for a period of so-called quiet. On that day enemy fire slackened somewhat, but, as No. 6 post was given a good deal of attention it was decided to hold it by night only and it was accordingly evacuated in the daytime. The next day shelling was more vigorous than ever and casualties mounted up. Shortly before 6 p.m. on the 19th the acting company serjeant-major of "D" Company, who was on duty in the line, reported that he saw about a hundred of the enemy in front of their trenches cutting their wire. He promptly put a Lewis gun in position. The artillery very soon opened fire, whereupon an intensive bombardment was put down on the British front line. After about an hour it lifted to the support and communication trenches and the Germans attacked the posts held by "D" Company. They met with no success at Nos. 3 and 7; but as No. 6 had not yet been reoccupied, they were able to enter it and attack Nos. 4 and 5 posts from the rear. These two posts were also being attacked from the front and they were eventually overwhelmed, the majority of the garrison being killed and Second-Lieutenant H. S. Carter and nine other ranks (mostly wounded) taken prisoners. In the meanwhile, preparations for a counter-attack were being made. Company Serjeant-Major C.

Gregory took up fifty men of "C" Company and joined Captain M. P. Gamon, who was organizing bombing parties in the support line. The parties advanced together. The enemy evacuated the posts they had occupied, leaving behind them one dead officer (who carried a bomb containing some burning liquid and wore khaki puttees, very old boots and a green uniform with red stripes down the breeches) and a number of bombs, wire-cutters and other stores. During this confused fighting, Second-Lieutenant H. McMullan went up from battalion headquarters to the front line and met the Germans who had entered No. 6 post. They tried to take him prisoner but, though he had lost his revolver and was unarmed, he struggled to such an extent that they gave up their efforts and left him lying with a bayonet wound in the lung and severe bruises on his head. The casualties throughout the day had been 2 officers wounded, 1 officer missing, 11 other ranks killed, 30 wounded and 17 missing. Lieutenant-General Sir T. D'O. Snow, commanding VII Corps, sent a telegram in which he said : "The Corps Commander congratulates all concerned on last night's fighting. . . . The counter-attack was delivered promptly and was well led. Both those in the trenches and those in the counter-attack fought as officers and men of the Lancashire Fusiliers always have fought and always will fight." The battalion was also mentioned in the Commander-in-Chief's despatch of 19th May, 1916, for its good work. It was generally believed at the time that this raid, one of a series on a wide front, was partly undertaken with the object of capturing a specimen of the Lewis gun which had recently been introduced.

17TH BN

By this time the two Bantam Battalions, 17th and 18th, had arrived in France, where they landed on 29th and 30th January, 1916. The 17th (Lieutenant-Colonel W. J. McWhinnie) had not long to wait for a chance to make its presence felt. For on its instructional tour in the line near Givenchy, a listening patrol with great coolness allowed an enemy party to come quite close to them so that they were able to deal with it the more effectively. Details are lacking ; but Brigadier-General L. A. E. Price-Davies, V.C., who was commanding the brigade to which the battalion was attached, sent a very complimentary note to the Commanding Officer.

16TH BN

The 16th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Abercrombie) was not so fortunate in its first encounter with the enemy. Since its arrival in France in November, 1915, it had spent several months of trench routine near Authuille on the River Ancre. Here, at about 11 p.m. on 9th March, 1916, a wiring party was driven back into the trenches by a very heavy bombardment of several calibres over an extensive front, 150 shells being counted in the first ten minutes. Some of this fell on the front line of the 16th Battalion, killing or wounding many of the sentries. But much of it fell on support and communication trenches and on reserve dug-outs ; and under cover of it the Germans raided the front line. When this was reoccupied later, there were signs of a severe hand-to-hand struggle and it was evident that the Lewis-gun post and the sentry-post close to the

point of entry had been put out of action by the bombardment as all the men of these two posts were found killed or wounded. This raid cost the battalion 1 officer (Lieutenant R. W. Sharratt) and 12 other ranks killed, 4 officers and 47 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 7 other ranks missing.

17TH BN. A fortnight later the 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel W. J. McWhinnie) followed up their success of the instructional tour by undertaking the first raid carried out by the 35th Division after it had taken over a sector as a complete division. The enterprise was carefully rehearsed; and at 6.35 p.m. on 24th March, three officers and fifty other ranks, under Captain E. T. Cowan, left the trenches near Richebourg L'Avoué, the start having been delayed for half an hour on account of a German searchlight which was not easily put out in spite of much artillery and rifle fire. Even as it was, conditions were against the party as a blizzard was raging when they set out, but suddenly stopped, leaving them clearly visible against the snow. Fire was at once opened on them, but they crept forward and managed to reach the German wire. They could not, however, get through it as the enemy was very much on the alert; and, after an exchange of bombs and rifle grenades, they had to withdraw, with a loss of 1 man killed and 1 officer and 10 other ranks wounded.

19TH BN. An act of self-sacrificing bravery which should not be forgotten occurred on 19th April, 1916, when Second-Lieutenant D. Wood, intelligence officer of the 19th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. A. Graham, D.S.O.), was instructing a class in bombing at Warloy-Baillon. A live bomb was badly thrown and rolled back into the practice trench. Wood picked it up and tried to throw it away. He was too late and his right hand was blown off, but his action undoubtedly saved several lives. He was awarded the Albert Medal, Class I.

11TH BN. After staying near the scene of their raids near Le Touquet in December, 1915, till March, 1916, the 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. D. Crosbie) marched to the Vimy area, where on 26th April they had a foretaste of what was in store for them later. The British position near Vimy was highly uncomfortable, being just below the crest of the famous Vimy Ridge, of which the enemy held all the advantage. Both sides had indulged in mining in order to improve their conditions; and mining was almost always actively in progress on both sides. The 11th Battalion took its turn in a sector near Souchez, where early on 20th April the enemy blew two mines and attacked under cover of a concentration of trench mortars and field guns. He was, however, driven back by bombs, rifle and machine-gun fire at a cost to the battalion of 5 N.C.Os. and men killed, 3 officers and 23 other ranks wounded and 28 missing, believed killed. Moreover, the battalion succeeded in making good the near lip of one of the craters and in inflicting considerable casualties on the enemy.

Further trouble occurred in this disturbed area on 4th May, when the Germans made three bombing attacks with the evident

intention of destroying the British mine shafts which they had located. They were repulsed with heavy loss, due partly to the artillery catching large numbers in their trenches which were packed with men. Second-Lieutenant J. E. Kinna, 11th Battalion, commanded the party sent to deal with the intruders and was commended by the Divisional Commander, Major-General B. J. C. Doran, for great coolness and determination.

15TH BN. Down in the Somme area on the following day, the 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Lloyd) was able to avenge the losses inflicted on its sister Salford battalion on 10th March. Late on 5th May, 1916, a party of 4 officers and 50 other ranks of the 15th Battalion, armed with revolvers and clubs and some grenades, left their reserve dug-outs at Black Horse Bridge, Authuille, and went up to the trenches held by the 16th Battalion in front of that village. The ground had been reconnoitred on previous nights by Captain E. C. MacLaren and Serjeant J. Pollitt. At 11.30 p.m. the former led out a party which laid tapes towards the enemy wire to mark the route to be followed. This ran obliquely across No Man's Land with the object of deceiving the enemy as to the point from which the raiders would start and to which they would return. The expectation was that when his artillery retaliated and tried to catch the raiders re-entering their own lines, they would put down shells directly opposite the point of attack and so miss them. At 11.30 p.m. also the covering party under Serjeant Pollitt went out and was disposed with two Lewis guns on the left to deal with a possible counter-attack and with a flank guard on the right. They were followed by a party under Major R. A. Thomas carrying two Bangalore torpedoes. All these parties pushed forward about one hundred and twenty yards from the front line and waited for the artillery bombardment which opened at midnight with a dummy bombardment by 8-inch howitzers lasting five minutes, followed by a genuine barrage on the enemy's wire and front line with the more accurate 6-inch howitzers lasting for twenty minutes and then lifting to the enemy's support lines for another thirty-five minutes. In all 3,331 rounds of various calibres were fired by the artillery of three divisions during this raid. Under cover of this fire, the raiding party, in two groups under Captain R. J. Smith and Second-Lieutenant J. R. Younger, moved out with ten yards between them and by 12.20 a.m. had arrived within sixty yards of where the shells were falling on the German wire. When the barrage lifted, a Bangalore torpedo was brought up and put into position. It failed to go off and Major Thomas had the second one brought up, which he fastened to the first one and set off. Both exploded and an excellent gap about ten yards long was made in the outer belt of wire. The failure of the first torpedo had caused a delay of about five minutes, but now luck favoured the raiders, for a gap was easily found in the rather inferior second belt. At 12.33 a.m. the raiders entered the German trench, killing the sentries and taking five prisoners, who were sent back. There was very little active opposition apart from a feeble counter-attack which was

driven off by vigorous bombing. But the German garrison seemed cowed and many more prisoners might have been taken but for its "passive resistance" in dug-outs. Time did not allow of the occupants being dragged forth; so they were given a few bombs and it is certain that twenty of them were killed. By 12.45 a.m. the raiders were all out of the trenches. No casualties had been incurred up to now, but while the party was lying in a hollow close to its own lines waiting to re-enter them, Captain Smith, Second-Lieutenant Younger, the machine-gun serjeant and another man were killed and five men were wounded. Captain E. C. MacLaren was awarded the Military Cross, Serjeant J. Pollitt the Distinguished Conduct Medal and Corporal J. Barbossa the Military Medal.

The Capture of "Crosbie Craters"

11th Bn. Mention has already been made of the very unsatisfactory situation of the British lines on the Vimy Ridge, where the enemy had almost all the observation. In May, 1916, it was decided to undertake a mining operation with the object of securing and consolidating a strong line of observation near Souchez at a place where the enemy's mine craters dominated a very wide area. The operation was entrusted to the 74th Infantry Brigade, at that time temporarily commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. D. Crosbie of the 11th Battalion. The latter, commanded by Major G. H. Cotterill, was selected to carry it out. The details were carefully practised beforehand, even down to the blowing up of a mine behind the line in order to give the troops an idea of what was involved in seizing the lip of a newly-made mine crater. The 102nd Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers, prepared and charged five mines; and the night of 15th/16th May was chosen for the operation. For nearly two days before, the weather had been wet and cloudy. This had impeded the final preparations, but it had on the other hand made enemy observation of them difficult from his craters and impossible from the air.

The 11th Battalion was to seize six craters, to be called, in order from the right, "Z," "Y," "X," "W," "V" and "Q 90.2," the latter being an old one which the new explosions were expected to improve. A party of the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment were to seize a crater on the left of these. Consolidating parties were found by the 105th Field Company, Royal Engineers, and the 6th South Wales Borderers. The assaulting parties detailed for the various craters were commanded by Second-Lieutenants A. K. McFarlan ("Z"), J. E. Kinna ("Y"), T. W. Wilson ("X"), E. H. Jewell ("W"), R. Barrett ("V") and R. Ganly ("Q 90.2"). In most cases, each was composed of 8 bombers, 4 spade men, 2 loophole men, 1 Lewis-gun team and 1 signaller with an electric torch. Reserve parties of Lewis-gunners and bombers were held in readiness under Lieutenant W. I. Edwards, Lieutenant F. C. R. Dunn and Second-Lieutenant W. F. Baker. All these parties were placed under the supervision of Major L. G. Bird.

At 8.27 p.m. on 15th May, a beautifully still night, the heavy artillery began shelling enemy batteries in order to drive their gunners below ground. At 8.30 p.m., three of the five mines were exploded. A German machine-gun at once opened fire. Ten seconds later the other two mines were sent up. Lieutenant-Colonel Crosbie's laconic comment in his report was, "That machine gun fired no more." But the enemy artillery took up the tale, to which the British artillery and trench mortars replied. The assaulting parties rushed forward; one man, seeing the bodies of Germans coming down to earth again after the explosion and remembering the recent wet weather, remarked "Blimey, Bill, it's raining Germans now." On the left, the near lips of the newly made craters were gained with little opposition. But on the right, McFarlan's party got too close to the mine which made "Z" crater and all except three men were buried owing to the trench falling in from the shock of the explosion, he himself being killed. Wilson's party missed its way to "X" crater and was lost, only Wilson himself and two men getting back. Kinna, however, very quickly grasped the situation and took control, gaining "Z" crater and part of "X" as well as his own, "Y," by 8.52 p.m. At about this time, reinforcements were asked for by signal from "Z" crater and more bombs from "W"; these were promptly sent up. By 9.25 p.m. the assaulting parties were firmly established on the near lips of craters "V" and "W" and had gained contact with the Loyal North Lancashire on the left. Lieutenant Edwards had done much to make the new position secure. As Lewis-gun officer, he had gone from crater to crater, ensuring that the guns were in order and reorganizing their tasks where necessary. In one crater, Serjeant A. Lucas had already chosen an excellent position for his gun when a part of it broke and it could no longer defend the position. Ordering one of his team to put it right, he kept the enemy under control by vigorous bombing until he was killed by a sniper.

Up to now casualties had not been heavy, but the enemy soon recovered from his first shock and launched determined counter-attacks on the new line, chiefly with bombs. Jewell, Barrett and Baker were all killed during this fighting, but their N.C.Os. promptly took command and carried on with the work of consolidation with excellent initiative. Ganly helped greatly by establishing a firm contact with the troops on each flank and showed great coolness and resourcefulness. The Lewis-gunners also did very good work and suffered heavily. Consequently the Germans were unable to penetrate the defence and, in spite of considerable artillery and machine-gun fire, the consolidating parties were able to put the craters in a proper state of defence and to establish satisfactory communications with the rear before dawn. At about 8 a.m. on 16th May, the remainder of the battalion came up under Captains Ward and Stanning and relieved the parties holding the craters. The whole battalion was relieved late on 19th May, after a trying period during which the enemy continually bombarded the trenches

and craters. The casualties between 15th and 10th May had been 4 officers and 30 other ranks killed, and 40 other ranks wounded. The Military Cross was awarded to Lieutenant W. I. Edwards and Second-Lieutenants J. E. Kinna and R. Ganly; the Military Medal was awarded to Serjeant G. W. Walton, Corporal W. Hall, Lance-Corporals E. Trudghill and T. Yates, and Privates L. Alty, T. Armstrong and A. Davies. The Third Army Commander (General Hon. Sir J. H. G. Byng) sent his congratulations to Lieutenant-Colonel Crosbie and all others concerned; and the Divisional Commander (Major-General B. J. C. Doran) sent a special message of appreciation to Lieutenant W. H. Reynolds and his signallers for the way in which, largely by means of electric torches, they had kept communications open between the craters and headquarters throughout the operation. The Commander-in-Chief himself inspected the 74th Brigade on 24th May and congratulated it on its work, particularly Lieutenant-Colonel Crosbie, Major G. H. Cotterill, the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers and the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. He also mentioned the 11th Battalion in connexion with these operations in his despatch of 19th May, 1916. The craters were named "Crosbie's Craters" and are so described in the Official History.

Patrols, Raids and Counter-Raids

1st Bn. It is a long time since any mention was made of the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel M. Magniac, D.S.O.) which, since its arrival in France in March, 1916, with the rest of the 29th Division, had been finding its feet in the strange conditions of the Western front in a quiet part of the line near Beaumont Hamel on the River Ancre, quite close to the 2nd Battalion. Nothing of any interest occurred to it until the middle of May. Then, after several nights of active patrolling, Lieutenant-Colonel Magniac and Second-Lieutenant P. Uren went out in front of the line on 17th May to visit a patrol commanded by Second-Lieutenant H. C. Pyper and to reconnoitre No Man's Land. The three officers went forward together and were fired on by an enemy listening-post at very close range. The two junior officers were both hit and the party scattered. Pyper was badly wounded in the arm, which was afterwards amputated; Uren was missing. Later the patrol, now commanded by Lance-Corporal Williams, saw an enemy party approaching, fired at it and killed its leader, the remainder bolting. On the following night, Second-Lieutenant G. R. Craig took out a patrol to clear up the situation and to bring in the body of the German shot by Williams. Shortly after the body had been brought in a strong enemy patrol appeared which tried to surround Craig's party; but, owing to his clever initial dispositions and the coolness shown by all ranks, the Germans, though greatly superior in numbers, were driven off. Craig had previously been commended for good patrol work and his action on this occasion was mentioned in the citation with which the Military Cross was awarded to him a few weeks later. The Germans

put up a notice on the 19th saying that Uren was dead and that they had buried him and asking for news of their missing warrant officer, which was given them in the same terms.

17TH AND 18TH BNS

Before the end of May, the 17th (Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Mills) and 18th (Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Irvine) Battalions had been involved in a local operation near Richebourg L'Avoué. On the evening of 30th May, the 18th Battalion was in the line and was about to be relieved by the 17th. But the relief was postponed until there was a lull in a heavy bombardment which fell chiefly on the sector held by 105th Infantry Brigade on the left where a relief was actually carried out. All telephone lines were cut except on the right. As no information could be obtained as to the situation on the left, Corporal H. Bloor and Private Dunn went up through the barrage in order to re-establish communication. Bloor was wounded, but they reached the left company and brought a message back. This showed that the battalion immediately on the left had vacated about two hundred yards of front line. Second-Lieutenant R. J. S. Tyhurst, Lewis-gun officer of the 17th Battalion, whose guns were already in the line in view of the relief, had already on his own initiative put a gun to cover this gap. On receipt of this news, the Commanding Officer of the 18th Battalion sent his adjutant, Lieutenant E. G. Gardiner, to find out exactly how matters stood. Gardiner went over the open under heavy fire and, having verified that the gap still existed, led the reserve company up to fill it. He left Lieutenant J. W. Strong in command of this extension of the battalion's line and returned to report to Lieutenant-Colonel Mills. Strong reorganized the defences and held the line until relieved by the 14th Gloucestershire Regiment at 4 a.m. on 31st May. Several unexploded German bombs were found in the empty trench, evidence that a hostile raid had taken place. The General Officer Commanding 105th Brigade sent a very cordial message of thanks to the 18th Battalion for saving and holding his line, and congratulations were also sent by the Divisional Commander. Lieutenant E. G. Gardiner (18th) and Second-Lieutenant R. J. S. Tyhurst (17th) received the Military Cross and Corporal H. Bloor (18th) the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

1ST BN

A few days later it was the turn of the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel M. Magniac, D.S.O.) once more, when it brought off a successful raid, its first, at Beaumont Hamel. The raiding party, consisting of Second-Lieutenants G. R. Craig, C. H. C. Rudd and F. J. Whittam and forty other ranks, all under the command of Second-Lieutenant E. W. Sheppard, left its billets at Louvencourt by motor bus at 6.30 p.m. on 3rd June and went up to the trenches of the 1st Essex Regiment. At 11.30 p.m. the party left the trenches, moved forward one hundred and twenty yards, extended and lay down, protected by a covering party under Whittam. At midnight a heavy bombardment was opened with the object of cutting the enemy wire. The Germans replied by playing a searchlight and putting up flares; but the party was not seen. When, however,

it moved forward, it lost direction and missed the point selected for entering the German trench and consequently the lane cut in the wire by the artillery. Craig thereupon set to work with a small party to carve a way through the wire by means of wire-cutters and two Bangalore torpedoes which were fired at 12.38 a.m. Only just in time the party was ordered back so as to be clear of a renewed bombardment due to fall at 12.40 a.m.; even so, Craig stayed close to the wire with Serjeant G. Gilman and Private S. Smallman with the object of getting quickly to work again to complete any wire-cutting that still might be needed when the guns again lifted on to the German trenches. When a lane had been cut, two parties, led by Craig and Rudd, entered the German line. They found it deserted but collected some very useful documents from the empty dug-outs. Corporal T. McManus went into a dug-out by himself and bombed the occupants. Two rifle grenades were fired from the German support trenches, but with no ill effects. The time limit had now come and at 12.55 a.m. the party made its way back, pursued across No Man's Land by shrapnel and machine-gun fire, but only losing one man wounded and one slightly wounded. Before leaving the German trench, the party had time to note with admiration that they were "scrupulously clean." Appreciation of the gallant work done on the enemy wire was shown by the award of the Military Cross to Second-Lieutenant G. R. Craig and of the Military Medal to Serjeant G. Gilman and Private S. Smallman.

16TH BN. Fine work in saving and attempting to save life was done by several members of the 16th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Abercrombie) on 5th June when the 11th Border Regiment made a successful raid from its sector. The Germans put down a heavy barrage in retaliation and a number of men of the 16th were buried. Serjeant A. Smith set to work to dig three of them out. He was nearly buried by a shell while he was at work, but he carried on and got the men away safely though injured. He was awarded the Military Medal. After the raid, Second-Lieutenant J. B. Roth led a patrol which searched No Man's Land till nearly dawn for casualties of the Border Regiment and brought in four bodies.

18TH BN. The 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Irvine) were not so fortunate in an attempted raid near a German salient known as "The Boar's Head" not far from Richebourg L'Avoué in the small hours of 11th June. Careful preparations had been made during the preceding day, including the laying of a telephone line into No Man's Land. At 12.45 a.m. the party advanced and had reached the German wire, when they were observed. Machine-gun and rifle fire was opened on them and the situation was not made easier by the fact that a good deal of shrapnel was bursting over No Man's Land. However, the party succeeded in throwing several bombs into the enemy's trenches before they were forced to withdraw. Lieutenant J. W. Strong was killed and Second-Lieutenant E. M. Stansfield was wounded while trying to bring his body in, a task which was successfully accomplished by others of the party. Eight N.C.Os. and men were also wounded.

The 2nd/5th Battalion's First Victoria Cross

Presumably as part of the measures taken to confuse the enemy as to the precise intentions of the Allies on the eve of the Battle of the Somme, the 55th Division (Major-General H. S. Jeudwine) arranged for gas and smoke to be discharged on 28th June, 1916, on a two-mile front, followed by raids in six different places by parties from six units, including the 2nd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel C. J. B. Bridgewater, 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons). The object of the raids was to find out the effects of the gas on the enemy, take prisoners, bomb dug-outs and capture machine-guns. A party of the 2nd/5th Battalion, consisting of 4 officers and 56 other ranks, under the command of Captain L. H. Bloy, carried out a fortnight's special training behind the line. Between 24th and 28th June, heavy bombardments of the German trenches were carried out in order to cut lanes in the wire; the enemy's billets and rear trenches were also systematically shelled, as was being done further south in preparation for the Battle of the Somme. After several delays caused by an unfavourable wind, the gas (euphemistically called "the accessory" in all orders and reports) was to have been discharged from 5 p.m. to 5.25 p.m. on 28th June, though actually it was still pouring out for at least ten minutes longer, as all the Royal Engineers in charge of it became casualties before they could turn off the taps of the cylinders. Artillery began a bombardment of the enemy's front line at 5.5 p.m., lifting to the support lines at 5.35 p.m., a smoke cloud being developed at the same time. At 5.35 p.m. the raiding parties moved forward. That of the 2nd 5th Battalion, operating near Blaireville, south of Arras, was split into three detachments, led by Captain G. C. Hutchinson, Lieutenant M. H. Young and Second-Lieutenant H. M. Ainscow. Captain Hutchinson was badly wounded on the way across; but, lying in the open, he continued to direct the actions of his party and to cheer them on. All parties suffered casualties in crossing No Man's Land. The right party bombed its way along the German front-line trench until it was stopped by a barricade of wood and sandbags; after bombing two dug-outs it was attacked by enemy bombers who came across the open, and was ordered to withdraw. Of the centre party, Ainscow and five men succeeded in working up a German communication trench for about forty yards; they were then likewise attacked by bombers from the open and ordered to retire, though not before Ainscow, in trying to establish a block, had shot three Germans with his revolver but had received a nasty wound and was taken prisoner. The left party, by now only nine strong, was led with great dash by Young, who had accounted for a German officer before he fell mortally wounded. Private J. Hutchinson then led the way and did excellent work with his bayonet. This party met a block similar to that which had held up the right party and it was noticeable that the positions of these two blocks corresponded exactly with the flanks of the lanes cut in the wire by the artillery. Nothing daunted, the party climbed over the block and bombed

2ND/5TH BN

several dug-outs. Bloy, in command of the 2nd/5th's party, died of wounds in German hands ; he was last seen running along the enemy parapet giving orders and using the butt of a rifle on several Germans who were standing on it. When the time came to withdraw Private Hutchinson held the enemy at bay until the last of his men was clear of the German trenches and all wounded had been carried back, although exposed to fierce rifle and machine-gun fire at close quarters. For his conspicuous gallantry, Private Hutchinson was awarded the Victoria Cross, the first to be gained by a war-time battalion of the Regiment or any second-line Territorial unit. When the retirement began, Captain Hutchinson crawled back to the British wire, collected some of the wounded in a shell hole and then cut a path for them through the wire under heavy fire. For his conspicuous gallantry he was awarded the Military Cross. Other decorations awarded for the raid were the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Serjeant S. Russ for crossing the open several times under fire and bringing in a number of wounded, including Captain Hutchinson ; and the Military Medal to Private J. W. Bennett for inflicting loss on the enemy and bringing back wounded. The casualties were 2 officers and 5 other ranks killed, 1 officer and 16 other ranks missing and 19 other ranks wounded. The operation had, however, not been a failure, as the party was able to report that several Germans had been sitting dead on the fire step and in dug-outs, and that a machine gun manned by an officer had been put out of action. General Jeudwine was certainly pleased and issued a most complimentary order.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME, 1916

"SOMME, 1916," "ALBERT, 1916," "BAZENTIN," "DELVILLE WOOD," "POZIÈRES," "GINCHY" "FLERS-COURCELETTE," "MORVAL," "THIEPVAL," "LE TRANSLOY," "ANCRE HEIGHTS," "ANCRE, 1916"

(Maps 1 and 9)

1st, 2nd, 2nd/5th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Battalions

The Origins, Setting and Objects of the Battle

THE reasons why five French and thirteen British divisions attacked where they did on 1st July, 1916, and how that date came to be chosen, are no concern of a regimental history; they are fully set out in the Official History and in other works dealing with the strategy and politics of the war. But, if the various phases and actions of the series of battles extending from 1st July to 18th November, 1916, are to be understood, it is necessary to touch briefly on the situation at the time when they began, the nature of the ground on which they took place, and their objects.

From 21st February, 1916, onwards the French Army had heroically withstood a series of heavy attacks at Verdun which had bled it nearly white. These attacks continued right through the summer, and it was hoped that the British attack planned for the end of June would relieve the pressure. The first half of the year 1916 had, for the British Army, been a period of comparative quiet, devoted to the completion of the training of the New Armies, first at home and then in the trenches. From the middle of May onwards as many divisions as possible spent some time behind the line, training for a big offensive which was designed to break into the German positions astride the Somme and to give an opportunity to the cavalry to go through and make the war mobile once more. Roads, railways, tramways, water supply and accommodation were all improved. Large numbers of guns were brought up and great reserves of ammunition accumulated.

The area of the operations had been the most peaceful part of the whole line ever since it was first established in September and October, 1914, during the "race to the sea." When the British (among them the 2nd and 2nd/5th Battalions) took over the Somme district from the French in July, 1915, an atmosphere of almost complete calm and charity prevailed; shots and explosions were rare, gas was unknown, and one could walk at will by day and by night provided he did not display himself too provocatively in or

2ND AND 2ND/5TH BNS.

near the actual front line and provided it was realized that the artillery of both sides had occasionally to justify their existence.

Two main rivers flow through the plain of Artois, the Somme and the Ancre. The country between them formed the main battle-ground of the British forces in the Battle of the Somme. It is mainly open, hedgeless and undulating, somewhat reminiscent of the Yorkshire Wolds, and has a chalk subsoil. It is cut into by a number of small streams which find their way into one or other of the two rivers. These streams, flowing some south, some north, rise in a long ridge running east-south-east from the River Ancre at Thiepval to the northern slopes of the valley of the River Somme near Peronne. Between these streams lie smaller ridges, jutting out into the valleys from the main ridge, like the branches of a fir tree. In some places the main ridge rises to a height of 300 feet above the River Somme. The country was then freely dotted with picturesque little villages and contained a few large woods. To the north of the Ancre, the country is very similar; but, with the exception of the Grandcourt–Serre ridge, its undulations are less easy to group into defined features.

The Germans had made the most of their eighteen months in this area. Beginning with the advantage that they had succeeded in 1914 in securing the observation over most of the area, so that the British were below them in most places, they had built concrete shelters and machine-gun emplacements and had constructed a number of highly organized "strong points" capable of all-round defence and designed to be, as it were, the piers on which resistance would rest. It was evident, from every indication, that the German defence would be a very tough nut to crack.

It was decided, therefore, to treat them to a week's bombardment by artillery of every calibre, from field guns to cut the wire to siege pieces to destroy the concrete dug-outs. All chance of surprise was thereby sacrificed, but it was hoped that nothing could survive the heaviest bombardment yet known and that the attacking troops would merely have to walk over and take possession, "mopping-up" such parties of the enemy as might somehow have survived. The first objective for 1st July was the near edge of the ridge running from the Somme to the Ancre, and the whole of the Grandcourt–Serre ridge; the final objectives for the infantry were behind the German second line and ran for the most part along the crest of the Somme-Ancre ridge, involving an advance of about five miles at the deepest; and the cavalry were intended to go through as far as Bapaume, which lay ten miles from the original line.

How the Story Will be Told

Though there is no lack of incidents from which to compile a narrative of the doings of the Regiment in the Battle of the Somme, 1916, their presentation has raised a considerable problem. Twelve battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers took part in the battle which,

as has been mentioned, lasted officially from 1st July to 18th November, 1916. Not all were in action on the same day. Five were engaged in the fighting on the opening day: three in one brigade, a fourth in another division some distance away, and the fifth in yet another division alongside the fourth. A sixth battalion entered the lists on 4th July, in quite a different part of the line, before some of those mentioned had completed their share of the initial action. Others appeared or reappeared later. One is reminded of a choral work on a large scale, in which parts enter at different bars, overlap each other, and have their sections of rest while others continue to be heard, and in which the counterpoint is at times of the loosest description.

Since, however, a narrative of this kind cannot be written as a musical score, some other means of presentation had to be found. The report of the Battles Nomenclature Committee divided the whole of the Battle of the Somme into a series of what may be called sub-battles—the Battle of Albert, 1916, lasting from 1st to 13th July; the Battle of Bazentin Ridge, from 14th to 17th July; and so on. It appeared best, therefore, to treat the Battle of the Somme rather as a drama, the sub-battles as its acts, and the doings of the various battalions as the scenes. When more than one battalion has been involved on the same day, the story begins with that on the right (in orthodox "Field Service Regulations" style) and works thence to the left.

All incidents which do not come within the limits of time or place laid down for the battle honours of the sub-battles qualified the battalions concerned for the comprehensive battle honour "Somme, 1916," which is borne on the Colours. Those episodes which, though occurring before 18th November, 1916, fall outside the limits of time and place prescribed for "Somme, 1916" as a whole, have been reserved for Chapter XI.

The Battle of Albert, 1916
1st to 13th July

"ALBERT, 1916"

1st, 2nd, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 18th, 19th and 20th Battalions

The Attack on Thiepval, 1st July

15th, 16th and 19th Battalions

15TH, 16TH AND 19TH BNS.

One of the keys to the high ground which was the Fourth Army's objective on 1st July was the village of Thiepval and the ridge running south-south-west from it. The Germans had turned the village itself into a small fortress, and the toe of the ridge was protected by a series of carefully prepared trenches, by means of which small areas could be given up without the whole ridge having to be evacuated. At the point was a formidable defensive work

known as Leipzig Redoubt. If both this and the village of Thiepval fell into British hands, there would be every chance of further converging attacks from the two ends being able to seize the whole ridge. This was the underlying idea of the plan adopted by Major-General W. H. Rycroft, of the 32nd Division, in which the 15th, 16th and 19th Battalions were serving; and it will be convenient to describe the actions of these units in the chronological order in which they became involved. It is perhaps important to record here that Thiepval eventually fell to four divisions on 26th September, 1916.

15TH BN. The 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Lloyd) was well acquainted with the ground in front of Thiepval as it had taken its turn in the line close to Authuille ever since it came to France at the end of 1915. From 14th to 27th June, 1916, it had been resting and preparing at Warloy Baillon. On the 27th it moved forward to Bouzincourt and on the evening of 30th June into the line about three hundred yards west of Thiepval, arriving in its assault positions at about 1 a.m. on 1st July. The 96th Infantry Brigade had for its objective the village of Thiepval and the Thiepval–Grandcourt road for about five hundred yards north of it. The 16th Northumberland Fusiliers were to be on the right and the 15th Lancashire Fusiliers on the left; the latter had on their left the 9th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers of the 36th (Ulster) Division. In support to the 15th Battalion were "B" and "D" Companies of the 16th Battalion. Within the 15th, "A" Company (Captain A. Lee Wood) formed the right half of the attacking line with "B" Company (Captain G. Y. Heald) in support, and "C" Company (Lieutenant H. C. Wright) the left half with "D" Company (Captain E. C. MacLaren) in support; one section of machine guns was allotted to the battalion. The distance between the attacking line and its support was to be about eight hundred yards.

Zero was 7.30 a.m., and shortly before it the attacking line was pushed forward under cover of the final bombardment until it was within nearly a hundred yards of the enemy trenches. At zero "A" and "C" Companies advanced, each on a frontage of two platoons. But when the barrage lifted from the German front line, the attackers came under very heavy machine-gun fire. Five officers were hit almost at once, and a large proportion of the battalion became casualties while crossing No Man's Land. Some, however, succeeded in reaching the German trenches, and at 8.30 a.m. a report reached Divisional Headquarters that the battalion had captured the enemy front line. What happened after that has never been clearly established. But there were grounds for believing that some parties of the leading companies pushed on and succeeded in entering the village, for air observers and an artillery observer on the ground reported later in the morning that British troops could be seen in, and to the east of, Thiepval. The belief that these troops were in the village was strongly held throughout the day by all the commanders concerned, and resulted in repeated efforts being made

by the 16th Battalion and others to get to them and make good the positions they had reached ; at the same time, a thorough bombardment of the village could not be put down for fear of hitting them. There is some evidence to show that these troops, few in number, fought their way most gallantly to their objective—the only troops on the divisional front to do so—that some of them later made their way to the left and joined units of the 30th Division, and that the rest were killed or taken prisoner.

In the meanwhile mopping-up detachments were busy in the German front line. But the enemy had by now emerged from their deep and untouched dug-outs and reoccupied their trenches. They quickly overcame the mopping-up parties ; and when the supporting companies advanced, falsely secure in the belief that "A" and "C" Companies had pushed on farther, they were met with such heavy fire that they were held up. All later attempts by parties or individuals to get forward resulted merely in their being killed or wounded. By 9 a.m. it was evident that any further efforts in this direction would only cause useless waste of life. As by this time only the adjutant, the Lewis-gun officer and about thirty men remained as a coherent body under the Commanding Officer, the latter set to work to collect such individuals as he could and withdrew them to more sheltered positions. By the evening some 150 non-commissioned officers and men had been got together, and the situation, as then known, was that out of the 24 officers and about 600 men who had gone over the top at 7.30 a.m., 21 officers and 449 other ranks had become casualties, and of these 15 officers and 288 men were missing, though a proportion rejoined later.

The battalion was withdrawn from the line that night to a position close to the River Ancre until 3rd July, when it marched back to rest at Martinsart.

16TH BN.

Like the 15th Battalion, the 16th (Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Abercrombie, C.M.G.) was familiar with the Thiepval area, and for the same reason. It was in the line near Authuille from 23rd to 26th June, when it went into dug-outs at Black Horse Bridge at the southern end of that village. Its role in the attack was to support the two assaulting battalions of the 96th Infantry Brigade and to form two strong points on the farther side of Thiepval as a defensive flank on the right of the 30th Division if necessary. It therefore left its dug-outs at about 11 p.m. on 30th June and moved to its places of assembly north of Authuille and three hundred and fifty yards behind the front line. "A" (Lieutenant A. N. Allen) and "C" (Captain R. B. Knott) Companies were in support of the 16th Northumberland Fusiliers ; and "B" (Captain T. F. Tweed) and "D" (Lieutenant F. F. Waugh) Companies were behind the 15th Lancashire Fusiliers. Waugh was hit on the way and Tweed took command of "D" as well as his own company. To "C" and "D" Companies was allotted the task of making the strong points, and they carried engineer material for the purpose.

The 16th Northumberland Fusiliers attacked at 7.30 a.m. But

by 8.10 a.m. it was evident that they had been held up. Allen, who had kept in touch with events and realized that he would be wanted to help, ordered his men to dump their engineer material while he went to consult the Commanding Officer of the Northumberland Fusiliers. As a result, he brought his company into the front line, and, with "C" Company, held it until 11 p.m. in place of the severely mauled attacking battalion. These companies themselves suffered heavily from shell fire, as the front line had been badly battered and gave little protection.

On the left, "B" and "D" Companies saw the failure of the 16th Northumberland Fusiliers and realized that all was not going well with the 96th Brigade's attack. But they also saw the 15th Lancashire Fusiliers advancing in good order and the 36th Division on the left making quick progress. A little later their view of the 15th was blocked by some trees in front of the village, but at 7.50 a.m. they heard that the 15th were in Thiepval and in difficulties. Tweed immediately ordered "B" and "D" Companies forward in order to help their Salford comrades. The men sprang forward eagerly, only to be met with a withering machine-gun fire which played havoc in the ranks. Nevertheless, the troops, though greatly reduced in numbers, managed to reach the trees near the village. They then realized that the enemy front line, at any rate, was held by the Germans and not by the 15th. Seeing a gap in the wire, they tried to dash through it in order to reach the village, so as to make quite certain that, if any of the 15th were holding on there, they should not lack help. But they could not succeed as the Germans had a machine gun trained on the gap and shot the men down as they ran towards it. The report that some of the 15th were in Thiepval seemed to be so definite, however, that the survivors of these companies were loth to abandon their efforts and stayed on the fringe of the German wire for another four hours. Second-Lieutenant E. J. Brooman was wounded three times before he could be persuaded to go to the medical aid post. Tweed crawled forward himself to reconnoitre a possible line of advance to the north of the village and tried to work several small parties forward, but without success. As nothing could be seen of any of the 15th Battalion in front, he reported the situation to Lieutenant-Colonel Abercrombie, who ordered him to withdraw and reorganize his men farther back. This he was able to do with a few further casualties.

Captain T. F. Tweed and Second-Lieutenant E. J. Brooman were awarded the Military Cross for their work on this day. The battalion's casualties were 8 officers and 223 other ranks, the majority of them being in the two left companies, "B" and "D." The battalion was relieved at 3 a.m. on 3rd July and withdrew to Aveluy Wood, marching back later the same day to Warloy Baillon.

19TH BN. Though the third Salford battalion of the 32nd Division, the 19th (Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. A. Graham, D.S.O.) was the last in order of time to take part in the fighting near Thiepval on 1st July,

it met with a little more success than the other two. Like them, it had spent all its time in France in the sectors near Authuille. From 24th to 27th June it was billeted at Warloy Baillon preparing for the big attack; on the 27th it moved to shelter trenches at the southern edge of Aveluy Wood; and on the evening of the 28th it moved back to Senlis until the 30th, when it moved forward again to dug-outs at Black Horse Bridge, on the outskirts of Authuille, which it reached at about 2 a.m. on 1st July.

The right assaulting brigade of the 32nd Division was the 97th, its task being the capture of the German first-line system at Leipzig Redoubt, at the toe of the enemy position on Thiepval ridge and about six hundred yards north of Authuille Wood. Its attack was based on a timed programme whereby three of its battalions were to capture the front line and at 8.30 a.m. the fourth, 11th Border Regiment, was to pass through to the German trenches immediately behind. The 14th Infantry Brigade, to which the 19th Lancashire Fusiliers belonged, was then to pass through and capture the German intermediate line, about a mile farther back, from Mouquet Farm northwards. This brigade was organized in three columns, the left of which included the 19th Battalion and the 1st Dorsetshire Regiment, and was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Graham.

At 7.10 a.m. the 19th Battalion moved off behind the Dorsetshire in column of fours, with a hundred yards between platoons, and marched south along the bank of the River Ancre for a thousand yards, turning then east into Authuille Wood and moving slowly along one of the tracks leading through it. The 97th Brigade attacked at 7.30 a.m. and, though a lodgement was made in a vital part of Leipzig Redoubt, the bulk of the attacking troops were held up. The 11th Border, advancing at 11.30 a.m. according to the timed programme and unaware of this, were caught by heavy machine-gun fire, most of which came from a German strong point on the south side of the valley which flanks the Thiepval ridge. This unit was practically wiped out. At 8.45 a.m., again according to programme, the 1st Dorsetshire emerged from Authuille Wood, having received no counter-orders or any information that all was not going well in front. They too were struck by the same fire which had destroyed the Border, and only about two officers and sixty men of the leading companies managed to reach Leipzig Redoubt, the remaining companies getting into such shelter as they could in the wood or in the British front-line trench.

The 19th Battalion, following the 1st Dorsetshire, arrived at the edge of Authuille Wood. Having had no news of what had happened in front, Lieutenant-Colonel Graham halted the battalion and viewed the ground which was being swept by shell and machine-gun fire. He decided to change his plan and to continue by platoon rushes. "A" Company (Lieutenant H. W. Huxley) were sent on by this method but seemed to melt away. The Commanding Officer therefore arranged for a smoke screen to be put down by Stokes

mortars. Under cover of this and of Lewis-gun and machine-gun fire, "B" Company (Captain G. Hibbert) and a platoon of "C" managed to cross the space between the wood and the British front line. Still no information came back; so Hibbert was sent on with a platoon to find out what had happened to the previous waves and to push on as far as possible. The British front line was found to be so crowded with the remnants of all the units which had previously gone forward that Huxley sent back word that no further men should be sent forward till the congestion was relieved. The remainder of the battalion was therefore sent to the left but here again the approaches to the original line were so blocked that it was ordered to stand fast.

In the meanwhile, "A" and "B" Companies had continued their efforts to advance to the German trenches in waves of between thirty and forty men. By about 1.30 p.m. the leading wave, under Huxley, got within ten yards of the enemy trench but, as only four men were left, it could go no farther. Captain Hibbert led the next wave and succeeded in entering the German trench, followed by Lieutenant H. Musker and Second-Lieutenant R. L. George with all the men that could be collected. These three were by now the only officers left with the companies which had emerged from the wood, and it was estimated that in the first six hours of this action the battalion had lost 8 officers and 150 men. Hibbert took command of all troops within reach and set about organizing the defence of his sector of the Leipzig Redoubt. To help him he had only one Lewis gun as the carriers of the others which were sent forward were all killed or wounded on the way. The supply of bombs soon ran out as very few of the bomb carriers were able to get across, partly because of the weight of their loads and partly because the buckets in which they carried them made them conspicuous targets. Hibbert therefore drew on the stores of German bombs in the Redoubt, and used some eight hundred of them. By means of these bombs but still more of his men's rifle fire he managed to hold his sector throughout the day against repeated bombing attacks which came mostly from a large mine crater on his left flank. At midnight, the whole battalion was relieved and managed to withdraw with all its wounded, though movement was very slow owing to considerable shell fire. By 1 a.m. on 2nd July it had reached its dug-outs at Authuille once more, having lost 11 officers and 270 men out of 20 officers and 577 men. It manned the defences of Authuille throughout 2nd July, during which Hibbert and Huxley were wounded by the blowing-in of their dug-out. That night it relieved a battalion in the line, but was relieved again late on 3rd July, reaching billets at Senlis at 12.30 a.m. on 4th July. Captain G. Hibbert was awarded the Military Cross for his gallant work in this operation and the battalion was congratulated by the Divisional Commander, for the capture of part of the Leipzig Redoubt proved of great value to later operations.

The Attack on Beaumont Hamel, 1st July

1st and 2nd Battalions

To the north of the River Ancre, and just to the left of the ground where the Salford battalions fought on 1st July, lay another important objective, the Grandcourt–Serre ridge. This was the goal of the VIII Corps, in which the 1st and 2nd Battalions were serving, in the 29th and 4th Divisions respectively. The distance from the British front line to the ridge was about two thousand yards, and the plan of attack allowed the troops three hours and twenty minutes to cross it. The Germans had protected the ridge by a very formidable series of defences, many of which lay in valleys out of sight of British artillery observers and were consequently not touched by the long preliminary bombardment. The most deadly of these was the strongly fortified village of Beaumont Hamel, lying in a salient of the front system, which could cover with flanking fire all the ground to be crossed by the 29th and 4th Divisions. It stood right in the path of the former, the 4th being immediately on the left of the 29th. One of its outposts was Hawthorn Redoubt, under which a large mine had been prepared. After much controversy, it was decided to explode this mine at 7.20 a.m. on 1st July, ten minutes before the attack was to be delivered. The unfortunate effect of this decision was that the Germans, who had been warned by the seven days' bombardment that a big offensive was imminent and were uncertain only as to the day and hour of its launching, rightly interpreted the explosion as the signal for the attack and thus had ten minutes' grace in which to man their trenches and make their final preparations. These were helped by the fact that all the British heavy artillery had to stop firing on the front trenches when the mine blew up so as to avoid the risk of hitting the parties seizing the crater. When the troops of the 29th Division came to leave their own trenches, their only covering fire was a thin barrage of 18-pounder guns, Stokes mortars and machine guns.

1ST BN. The 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel M. Magniac, D.S.O.) had been in the Beaumont Hamel district since it came to France from Egypt in March, 1916. From 15th to 29th June, the majority of it was at Mailly Wood, practising the attack. "C" Company, however, and the ten per cent. battle reserve, under Major A. T. Le M. Utterson, Leicestershire Regiment, took over a portion of the line on 23rd June and carried out a series of patrols and raids in order to discover the state of the German wire at various stages of the preliminary bombardment and whether the enemy was manning his front line. On 29th June the main body was addressed by the Divisional Commander, Major-General H. de B. de Lisle, who said: "To you has been set the most difficult task—that of breaking the hardest part of the enemy's shell." That evening it went up into the line.

The battalion's objective was the village of Beaumont Hamel

itself. Between this and the British front line lay a sunken road, between ten and fifteen feet deep and running north and south, shallow at its northern end but overhung and lined with trees at the southern. Tunnels had been dug from the British front line to this natural trench, and one of these was opened up on the night before the attack, whereupon at 3.30 a.m. on 1st July "B" and "D" Companies, with the Brigade Bombing Company and eight Stokes mortars, occupied the sunken road. Battalion headquarters moved thither at 7 a.m., at which time the Germans began shelling the road with field guns, having apparently noticed the communication trench made by the tunnels. Hot breakfasts were issued to all ranks; and several photographs were taken in the sunken road by Mr. Malins, the official photographer. Officers were dressed like the men. The latter each carried 120 rounds of ammunition, two days' rations and two bombs; the leading companies carried fifty shovels and ten picks each; each platoon carried two trench bridges; and men of the rear companies carried engineer stores. Few could get much sleep before the attack owing to the incessant roar of the bombardment.

At 7.20 a.m. the mine below Hawthorn Redoubt exploded, and "B" and "D" Companies lined up for the attack while the 86th Stokes Mortar Battery opened a hurricane bombardment. At 7.30 a.m. the leading sections of those companies moved forward and "A" Company began to leave the front line to support them. The first two lines of "B" and "D" Companies had not moved many yards when enemy machine guns opened fire. Their third and fourth lines were almost annihilated as they left the sunken road, and only a few wounded, including the two company commanders (Captains G. P. Nunneley and C. F. Wells), succeeded in crawling back into it. "A" Company also suffered heavily in its advance to the sunken road, but Captain E. G. Matthey managed to reach its northern end with a few men and to push on a short way before he fell mortally wounded. "C" Company was caught by machine-gun fire as it left the front line, Captain E. M. Dawson and Company Serjeant-Major Nelson being hit as they stood up to give the order to advance. One platoon was blocked by wounded in the communication trench leading to the sunken road. But Second-Lieutenant W. R. B. Caseby and about sixty men reached the latter, though they were so encumbered with coils of wire and tools that many of them rolled down its steep banks and half an hour's delay resulted before the remnants of "A" and "C" Companies could be reorganized for a further advance.

Serjeant Caulfield, a Lewis gunner, spotted a German machine gun firing from behind some debris in the village and pointed it out to Lieutenant-Colonel Magniac, who ordered two Lewis guns to engage it. But no sooner had they opened fire than they were shelled by field guns, one gun being hit—a tribute to the quickness and accuracy of the German observation. The machine gun, however, did not again fire from the same position.

At 8.15 a.m. Lieutenant-Colonel Magniac ordered the Stokes mortars to open a rapid burst of fire, under cover of which Caseby was to lead forward some seventy-five men who had been collected, with a view to gaining a footing in the northern end of the village, where the ground was higher and promised a good field of fire. The party dashed forward with great bravery, but were caught by machine-gun fire as they topped the crest a few yards from the sunken road and were mown down, only Caseby, Lieutenant I. Gorfunkle and about ten men reaching the German wire.

It was by then evident that the battalion could not succeed in its task and, though the brigadier issued orders for a further attack at 12.30 p.m., with an artillery bombardment, he immediately countermanded them on learning that Lieutenant-Colonel Magniac had by now only about seventy-five men and one officer in the sunken road and some fifty in the front line and elsewhere, while over one hundred wounded lay in the road. He ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Magniac to reorganize his battalion, make sure of holding the sunken road and watch his left flank. But before this fresh order arrived, an attempt was made to comply with the original message, Captain E. W. Sheppard doing very useful work in trying to collect unwounded men; and at 12.30 p.m. Major Utterson advanced with the only men he could collect, some twenty-five in all, with the intention of attaching to himself the unwounded men in the sunken road and pushing on to the German lines. Actually, he and four men alone survived to reach the road.

The afternoon was spent in trying to organize the road for defence. German shells caused more casualties; and snipers killed a good many of the wounded as they moved or tried to put on their field dressings. At 6 p.m. the sunken road was evacuated except for a party of one officer and twenty-five men detailed to hold it during the night. After dark all available stretcher-bearers and other men searched for wounded. Throughout the night wounded men crawled in; and about midnight Second-Lieutenants G. R. Spencer, I. Gorfunkle, G. R. Craig and Caseby came in with about twenty men, having spent the day in a small hollow just short of the German wire, too weak in numbers to force their way through, but able to make a useful contribution to the battle by keeping up a flanking fire towards Hawthorn Redoubt.

The day had cost the battalion many casualties: 7 officers had been killed and 14 wounded; of the other ranks, 156 were killed, 298 wounded and 11 missing. The brigadier in his report recorded his opinion that he did not think that any troops could have taken the German line as held that day. Indeed, it was not captured until 13th November, 1916, and then only by two brigades, with the help of special artillery preparation and a new method of using gas. Captain C. F. Wells, who, though wounded early in the day, remained with his men for six hours until compelled by weakness to retire, received the Military Cross, as did Captain G. P. Nunneley and Second-Lieutenants W. R. B. Caseby and E. W. Sheppard. Military

Medals were awarded to Serjeant V. C. D. Froude, Corporal T. McManus, and Privates W. Brain, G. W. Capon, J. A. Dickenson, J. Richardson and J. Wilson.

The battalion remained in the front line, strengthening the defence of the sunken road, until 3rd July, when it was ordered to move to some rear trenches which were so devoid of shelter or means of cooking that Lieutenant-Colonel Magniac asked that it should be allowed to stay where it was. A small party was eventually sent to the rear trenches as originally ordered, the remainder going back to bivouacs at Auchonvillers, where it was shelled by 5.9 inch guns. On 4th July the whole battalion marched to Acheux Wood, "a very depressed force."

2ND BN. Nor was the 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. B. Freeth, C.M.G., D.S.O.) more fortunate in this action. The battalion had spent the early part of the year in trench routine south of Arras. Towards the end of May it had been withdrawn from the line and sent to a training area twenty miles in rear. There followed a period of work in the sector of the front line from which the attack of 1st July was to be launched, and a short period of rehearsals of the actual attack carried out behind the line over a reproduction of the German position. The battalion returned to normal duty in the line in the middle of June. As before, it formed part of the 12th Infantry Brigade, which was now commanded by Brigadier-General J. D. Crosbie, recently in command of the 11th Battalion.

The objective of the 4th Division, as already described, was the northern part of the Grandcourt-Serre ridge, the remainder being attacked by the 29th Division. The plan provided for the 11th Infantry Brigade, increased by two Territorial battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, to attack on the whole front of the 4th Division at 7.30 a.m., and for the 10th and 12th Brigades to leave their assembly trenches about an hour later, advance through the 11th Brigade and seize the final objective, which was the German second-line system of trenches about 1,500 yards behind their front line. The 10th Brigade was on the right, the 12th on the left. Within the 12th Brigade, the 2nd Essex Regiment on the right and the 2nd King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment on the left were leading, and the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers on the right and 1st Duke of Wellington's Regiment on the left were in reserve. Each of the two latter battalions was to detail two companies to carry engineer material for the consolidation of the objective. The orders provided that, if the attacking battalions used up all their own supports and still needed help, the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers were to place not more than one company at the disposal of each. The 2nd Battalion operation orders accordingly instructed "A" Company (Captain J. Collis-Browne) to support the 2nd Essex Regiment and "B" Company (Captain L. B. L. Seckham, M.C.) the 2nd King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, sending up such reinforcements as might be demanded and informing battalion headquarters of the numbers sent. The battalion's task on reaching the final objective

was to make two strong points, each capable of holding a platoon, two machine guns and a mortar.

The assembly area of the battalion lay in a reserve line of trenches about a thousand yards north of Mailly-Maillet. "A" and "B" Companies were in front, each on a frontage of a hundred and fifty yards, "C" (Captain H. W. Sayers) and "D" (Captain W. D. P. Mansell) in rear and close to battalion headquarters. Direction posts for the advance were put up in places out of sight of the enemy; and bridges for crossing the support trenches were laid on the night of 30th June. Each section leader had two lengths of rope weighted at one end and looped at the other: he, being comparatively unladen, was to cross unbridged trenches first, swing the rope back to his heavily burdened men and pull them across one by one. The device is said to have proved effective. The load carried by each man, except certain specialists, included 170 rounds of ammunition, two bombs, a day's rations and an emergency ration. It is of interest to note that steel helmets were worn in action for the first time on this occasion. After deducting carrying parties and the ten per cent. reinforcement, the strength of the battalion in the assembly area was 24 officers and 591 other ranks.

The battalion moved from its camp at Bertrancourt at 11.30 p.m. on 30th June, receiving a rum ration before leaving and an issue of hot tea on arrival at the assembly area at 2 a.m. A breakfast of bacon and tea was served at 6.30 a.m. Sleep in the interval had been almost impossible, as the area was close to guns of all sizes which fired more or less continuously throughout the night; but fortunately no casualties resulted from the enemy's retaliation.

Between 8 and 8.30 a.m. on 1st July the battalion advanced in artillery formation on a frontage of two hundred and fifty yards, with two hundred yards between companies. On crossing the Mailly–Sucrerie road, it heard from wounded men that the attack of the 11th Infantry Brigade had been completely successful and that the German front line had been occupied. But, soon afterwards, the sound of German rifle and machine-gun fire began to be heard, and it was evident that no "walk-over" was in store. The Roman road running north-west from Beaumont Hamel was reached at 9 a.m. Up till then no casualties had been incurred. But a few minutes later the first serious barrage was met, and thereafter casualties became frequent, Captain H. W. Sayers, Lieutenant R. S. MacIver and Second-Lieutenant C. D. Roberton (signalling officer) being killed and Captain J. Collis-Browne, Lieutenant G. G. Bowen and Second-Lieutenant C. Gregory wounded. Nevertheless the advance was carried out in perfect order, though at a faster pace than laid down in orders, until the Roman road had been passed, when sections began to become separated. Much cross-fire was coming from enemy machine guns in the villages of Beaumont Hamel and Serre, which should by then have been in the hands of the 29th and 31st Divisions—or at least so fully engaged as not to be able to spare any attention for the 4th Division. In some places troops

of the latter division could not cross No Man's Land; but opposite a German strong point known as the Quadrilateral (about 1,200 yards south-west of Serre), which had been seized by the 11th Brigade, it was possible to cross without great difficulty or many casualties. At about 9.15 a.m., in view of the lack of success on the front as a whole, orders were issued for the 12th Brigade to stand fast. But as all its units were on the move, messages had to be sent by runner, and they failed to reach any unit except "C" Company. The remainder of the battalion pushed on; and by inclining to the left and so getting some shelter under the north side of Redan Ridge, they were able to avoid the machine-gun fire from Beaumont Hamel. Crossing the German front line south of the Quadrilateral, they pressed forward to reinforce the advanced elements of the 11th Brigade. Heavy casualties nevertheless occurred, Captain M. P. Gamon (intelligence officer) and Second-Lieutenant H. C. Kenion being killed and Lieutenant A. D. Macdonald and Second-Lieutenant C. L. Rougier being wounded at this stage. On entering the German lines, companies broke up into sections and a good deal of telescoping and mixing occurred. "A" and "B" Companies worked their way up to the furthest trenches held by the 11th Brigade, and were followed by part of "D" Company. The remainder helped to consolidate the old German front line.

It was now 11 a.m. The enemy were counter-attacking in front and from the flanks, chiefly with bombs, but supported by very accurate machine-gun fire. At first our troops suffered from a serious shortage of bombs. Later a line of bomb carriers was organized across No Man's Land, and a good supply was maintained for the rest of the day. A ding-dong struggle, with much close fighting, continued in and near the Quadrilateral throughout the day and far into the night. Seckham and part of "B" Company, working under the orders of the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Seaforth Highlanders (10th Brigade), held on until 2 a.m. on 2nd July. He was ably helped by Company Serjeant-Major J. N. Laverick, who not only organized men of different units into sections and platoons, but found a Stokes mortar and brought it into action, though he had never seen one before, firing it as long as the ammunition lasted. Lieutenant-Colonel Freeth moved from company to company, often across the open, and encouraged the men with praise for what they had done.

Shortly before nightfall orders were received that the battalion should assemble in the trenches in Elles Square, in the old British line, so as to be in support to the front line, which was occupied by the Essex, King's Own Royal Lancaster and Duke of Wellington's Regiments. The majority of the battalion being still in the Quadrilateral, all that could at first be collected was Lieutenant-Colonel Freeth, Lieutenant G. C. Martin (adjutant), two officers of "C" Company and about a hundred rank and file. During the night Captains Seckham and Mansell and Second-Lieutenants C. P. Ranger,

H. T. Williams (who had been wounded) and W. F. Hall came in with about a hundred and thirty more non-commissioned officers and men, having skilfully evacuated their position at the Quadrilateral with few casualties. In the early hours of 2nd July the battalion was reinforced by the arrival of Major A. J. W. Blencowe, seven other officers and about sixty other ranks, the ten per cent. reserve.

The casualties during 1st July had been 6 officers and 31 other ranks killed, 9 officers and 273 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 48 other ranks missing.

The battalion stayed in the trenches at Elles Square till early on the morning of 3rd July, when it moved back to its assembly trenches of 30th June near Mailly-Maillet. During the afternoon of 3rd July a German counter-attack was feared and the battalion was sent up to the line at 11.30 p.m. It spent a very uncomfortable night in a communication trench and a downpour of rain, moving back to Mailly-Maillet on the night of 4th/5th July. On the evening of 5th July it relieved the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers and part of the King's Own in the line, its strength having been increased to 23 officers and 400 other ranks owing to the rejoining of various carrying parties. The weather had now become very wet and the trenches had been badly damaged by German artillery and were full of dead, with the result that the battalion spent six most uncomfortable days before it was relieved by the 1st Hampshire Regiment on the night of 10th/11th July, after many casualties. A raid, under the command of Second-Lieutenant D. L. Waghorn, tried on the night of 9th/10th July to enter the German lines in order to take prisoners and inflict casualties but with strict orders to avoid losses in view of the weak state of the unit ; and, though it was not able to damage the enemy, it was successful in finding out how and in what strength the enemy was holding the remains of his line. Between 5th and 10th July smoke and petrol bombs were discharged, apparently with the object of frightening the Germans ; but the only results were retaliatory artillery fire and yet more casualties.

At last the battalion was allowed to rest, and it spent five days, from 11th to 16th July, in a very pleasant camp at Bertrancourt.

The decorations awarded to the 2nd Battalion for its work included a bar to his Military Cross to Captain L. B. L. Seckham, the Military Cross to the Medical Officer, Captain G. M. Scott, R.A.M.C., who was wounded, and the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Company Serjeant-Major J. N. Laverick.

Quadrangle Trench, Contalmaison, 5th to 7th July

10th Battalion

The next scene in the first act of the drama of the Battle of the Somme has a different setting from that just described, and takes place farther to the south, on the undulating ground north of

Fricourt. Attacks in this area on 1st July had been partially successful; the 7th Division had taken Mametz and the 21st Division on its left had penetrated half a mile into the German lines. Fricourt had been "pinched out" on 2nd July, and by 4th July the British line ran north-west from Mametz, across the valley in which lay Fricourt Wood and along the spur north of Fricourt, whence it looked down into the hollow which had to be crossed before the defences of Mametz Wood and Contalmaison could be reached. The next scene of the Battle of Albert was to consist of an attack on Quadrangle Trench, the outer position covering those
10TH BN. places. The 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel T. S. H. Wade) was cast for a role in it.

After the action at The Bluff in February, 1916, this battalion had been in the Armentières sector till May. It then went to the back areas for rest and training till the middle of June, when it moved down to the Somme and from 23rd to 28th June held a sector of trenches opposite Mametz. From 29th June to 2nd July it rested at the Bois des Tailles, near Morlancourt. On 3rd July it moved up to take over former German trenches about half a mile north of Fricourt, with one company in reserve in Lonely Copse and Lonely Trench, one in Lozenge Alley east of Lozenge Wood, one in Crucifix Trench and one near Birch Tree Wood. It was no easy task as the trenches were occupied by several units of the 21st Division, and the ground was wholly unknown and unreconnoitred. Nevertheless, the relief took place without a hitch. Early on 4th July the battalion sent a patrol up a new communication trench, which it reported badly damaged by our own shell fire, from Shelter Wood to Quadrangle Wood. The party reached the latter spot unseen, but then met a sentry. The Germans in Quadrangle Trench, which lay two hundred yards behind Quadrangle Wood, opened fire, but the trench appeared to be lightly held. The patrol brought back an abandoned German machine gun. Later in the day the battalion extended its line to the right to include the whole of Shelter Wood; this was accomplished by 11.45 p.m. with no enemy interference other than normal shelling.

At 12.15 a.m. on 5th July the artillery opened a bombardment of Quadrangle Trench, under cover of which the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers and 10th Lancashire Fusiliers crept to within a hundred yards of the enemy position. At 12.45 a.m. the two battalions charged. In the 10th Battalion, "C" Company (Captain G. W. Thacker) and "D" Company (Captain H. M. Adcock) captured Shelter Alley and Quadrangle Trench without much fighting except on the left, where they were met with rifle and machine-gun fire. One gun in particular was causing much trouble to "D" Company; but Serjeant R. Hitchings threw a bomb at it, rushed forward, seized the gunner, and so enabled the objective to be captured. Unfortunately, the company commander, Captain Adcock, was killed as he leapt into the German trench.

The position was captured by about 2 a.m., and the day was

Official Photograph

Part of 1st Lancashire Fusiliers fixing bayonets fo

(The warrant officer on the right, fixing his bayone

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or the Battle of the Somme, 1st July, 1916.

t, is Company Serjeant-Major E. Nelson.

spent in consolidating it, Shelter Trench (which had been badly damaged by very accurate shooting by the enemy's 5.9 inch guns and was thickly strewn with German dead) being prepared as a defensive flank facing north-west and a post established in Quadrangle Trench near its junction with Shelter Alley. Thacker reconnoitred Quadrangle Trench as far as the outskirts of Contalmaison and established a block in it. He was twice wounded before he would go to the Regimental Aid Post. Lieutenant H. B. Pegrum came up from battle reserve and took command of "C" Company.

On 6th July more posts were established. At 1 p.m. the Germans bombarded the front line (which had also suffered from short shooting by our own artillery) and attempted a bombing raid on the junction of Shelter Alley and Quadrangle Trench. It was unsuccessful, but Lieutenant W. S. Orpen was killed. During the afternoon Lieutenant V. H. Clay led a party to reconnoitre Pearl Alley. He met several enemy bombers, shot two of them with his revolver, drove off the remainder with bombs and established a block from which he repulsed several bombing counter-attacks. The block was, however, driven in about 10 p.m. The enemy seemed to suspect that an attack was impending as a patrol of the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers met a German raiding party on its way to attack the British line.

Nor was the enemy wrong in his surmise. Orders were issued for an attack to be delivered at 2 a.m. on 7th July. As its first objective, the battalion was to seize Quadrangle Support Trench, and establish a defensive flank along Pearl Alley which ran northward about five hundred yards east of Contalmaison. The battalion's second objective was to capture (with the aid of four machine guns) Acid Drop Copse, which lay in the angle made by Quadrangle Support Trench and Pearl Alley, and to convert it into a strong advanced post capable of all-round defence but especially of firing towards Mametz Wood. The operation would have had the effect of driving a wedge between Mametz Wood and Contalmaison and of affording a good base from which to turn the flank of either.

Quadrangle Support Trench lay over the crest of a hill and was invisible until troops had nearly reached it. Our artillery could therefore get no observation on to it and fired short of it during the preliminary bombardment. Its occupants were consequently unhurt. The Germans were apparently about to launch a counter-attack, and their trenches were strongly held.

The result was that, when the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers and 10th Lancashire Fusiliers left their positions at 2 a.m. and approached Quadrangle Support Trench, they were received with heavy rifle and machine-gun fire and driven back, though the two left companies under Lieutenant H. B. Pegrum managed to establish themselves in Pearl Alley and to hold on until daybreak, though they could make no contact with any troops on their right, so that their right flank was completely "in the air." Two small parties, numbering thirty in all, under Lieutenant D. Gale and Company Serjeant-

Major H. Harris, found themselves in part of Contalmaison and, after destroying four German machine guns, brought back twenty prisoners and a machine-gun lock. At 4 a.m., just as a company of the 1st Worcestershire Regiment was about to attack, the enemy delivered a frontal counter-attack which drove it and part of the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers back to Quadrangle Trench.

At 12 noon the Germans launched a heavier counter-attack which expelled the neighbouring division from its lodgement in Contalmaison and drove back other units into Quadrangle Trench and Pearl Alley, where they mixed with the 10th Battalion, and produced a bewildering medley of regiments. Company Serjeant-Major R. Toms very gallantly took command of his company when all the officers had become casualties and, after this counter-attack, held on to his position close to the enemy for several hours. Lieutenant-Colonel Wade, finding it impossible to get any information as to what the situation really was, went forward and took command of the mixed details. He heard that two companies of the Welsh Regiment were holding on to the edge of Contalmaison and, with some difficulty, sent up to them reinforcements consisting of his own reserve, "A" Company of the 10th Battalion, and some men of three other units. The attack was successful and "A" Company was withdrawn. It is remarkable that throughout the day almost all the information which reached 52nd Brigade Headquarters about any part of its front came from Lieutenant-Colonel Wade, even though it did not relate to the 10th Battalion.

At 5 p.m. on 7th July the brigade was withdrawn from the line. The 10th Battalion went to Méaulte. On the 8th it moved to Ville-sur-Ancre, on the 10th to Riencourt, and from 15th to 23rd July it enjoyed a rest at Villers-sous-Ailly. Its casualties had been 9 officers killed, 5 officers wounded, and 393 other ranks killed and wounded. The Military Cross was awarded to Captain G. W. Thacker, Lieutenant V. H. Clay and Company Serjeant-Major R. Toms. The Distinguished Conduct Medal was awarded to Company Serjeant-Major H. Harris, to Serjeant R. Hitchings, and to Private H. Hollinshead, who had shown great gallantry as a stretcher-bearer on numerous occasions. During the fighting just described he was dressing the wounds of four men in a forward position when he was attacked by six of the enemy. He drove them off with rifle fire and successfully brought in the wounded men.

Ovillers, 7th to 10th July

11th Battalion

The next incident to be recorded follows on from that just described and, in a sense, arose out of it, to the extent that the attack on Ovillers and round the north flank of Contalmaison could not have been attempted but for the progress made immediately to the south in the area in which the 10th Battalion fought. By

a coincidence, it was the battalion next in numerical order, the 11th, which now comes on the scene. 11TH BN.

After its capture of "Crosbie Craters" on Vimy Ridge in May, 1916, this battalion had been withdrawn into divisional reserve at Orlencourt. It lost its Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel J. D. Crosbie, on his promotion to command the 12th Infantry Brigade, in which the 2nd Battalion was serving. His place was taken for a short time by Major G. H. Cotterill and then by Lieutenant-Colonel L. G. Bird. The battalion moved south on 14th June and spent a week training behind the Somme area, paying particular attention to physical training and bayonet fighting. On 25th June it began to move forward by stages, reaching Bouzincourt on 4th July. Here the majority bivouacked in a field, while a few lucky ones went into huts. Before everybody had fully settled down, a heavy thunderstorm broke—the same that made life so very uncomfortable for the 2nd Battalion, sent up to wait for an expected German counter-attack which never came—and most of those who were not under cover were soaked to the skin. On 6th July the battalion marched through Albert to bivouacs in dead ground behind the original British reserve line to the south of the Albert–La Boisselle–Pozières road, arriving at about 4 p.m. All the ground between the ridge which lay in front and the River Ancre behind was covered with troops bivouacking and with batteries of various kinds in action, " presenting a scene like Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday." Fortunately, enemy aircraft were not allowed to see this scene and his artillery refrained from shelling the area.

The situation on this part of the front at that time was that the attacks on 1st July directed against La Boisselle, Ovillers La Boisselle and the high ground beyond them had failed except for a very small lodgement south of La Boisselle. Attacks on the succeeding days had given the British possession of the village of La Boisselle, but no more. The 74th Infantry Brigade, of which the 11th Battalion formed part, was placed under the orders of the 12th Division to help it in the capture of Ovillers on 7th July.

The ground was entirely new to the brigade, and only the hastiest reconnaissance of the newly captured positions in La Boisselle was possible to Commanding Officers, who did not arrive there until after dark. The 11th Battalion, except "B" and "D" Companies, which were kept in brigade reserve in order to carry rations and ammunition, moved forward at 11 p.m. on 6th July to some reserve trenches on the northern edge of the village of La Boisselle. The Germans were shelling the old No Man's Land south-west of the village fairly heavily at the time, and some casualties were suffered as the troops crossed the former British front line and entered the ruins of the houses. At 1 a.m. on 7th July the battalion took over a line of trenches from the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles. Throughout the night the British artillery kept up a heavy bombardment which reached its greatest intensity between 7 and 7.30 a.m. At 8 a.m. the 9th Loyal North Lancashire

Regiment and the 13th Cheshire Regiment delivered an attack which was largely successful and gained possession of some trenches about three hundred yards nearer to Ovillers. "A" Company (Captain F. C. R. Dunn) and half of "C" Company (Captain J. C. P. E. Metcalfe) were sent forward with other troops to help in the work of consolidation. There was considerable confusion and, as only two companies were left in brigade reserve, it was decided to make no further attempt to reach the final objective. The enemy did not counter-attack, but his machine guns and snipers in the ruins of Ovillers made things uncomfortable, as did the 5.9-inch shells of his artillery. It rained during most of the day and the state of the trenches became very bad, so that the work of consolidation was heavy and arduous. Owing to the congested state of the trenches and the unnecessary number of casualties which resulted from it, "A" Company was withdrawn from the line during the afternoon. But the battalion intelligence section, under Second-Lieutenant A. C. Altham, found a number of German maps, letters and other documents in dug-outs of the captured trenches which yielded much useful information. In the evening a strong reconnaissance party was sent out under Metcalfe to investigate the situation on the left of the new position near the La Boisselle–Ovillers road, where a gap was believed to exist.

Very early on 8th July the brigade on the left made good progress by means of bombing attacks. In the afternoon the battalion received orders to attack at dusk a line of trenches running south-east from the La Boisselle–Pozières road and situated about five hundred yards north-east of the front line then held. "C" Company (Metcalfe) and one company of the 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers assembled in the "jumping-off" trench with orders to advance quietly towards the objective and seize it if the opposition was not severe; if the position was found to be strongly held, they were to hold their ground and await reinforcements. At about 7.30 p.m. they went forward in two waves without any artillery barrage. They were subjected to machine-gun fire at long range from the direction of Ovillers, but arrived without loss at their objective, where fourteen prisoners were taken. Not realizing that they had in fact reached their goal, they pushed on another six hundred yards to a partially dug trench which lay almost behind Contalmaison and Ovillers. There they found a few Germans, who disappeared hurriedly towards Pozières, which was now only a thousand yards away. While the Irish Fusiliers cleared the left flank by bombing and by forming a block, "C" Company set to work to make some cover for itself as its new trench provided little. Carrying parties with wire and tools from "B" and "D" Companies, under Captain R. Ganly, M.C., and Second-Lieutenant A. MacDougal, came up from the brigade reserve during the night and helped in the work.

The mistake about the objective was not discovered till next day. In the meanwhile the artillery put down a protective barrage in front of the true objective, with the result that shells fell amongst

and just behind "C" Company, while shrapnel burst over it. And naturally the Germans, as soon as they grasped what had happened, began shelling the captured position. Metcalfe's party was therefore not between, but in, two fires. Casualties were frequent, but the men stuck to their work and dug themselves in. During the night a German working party, apparently unaware of the situation, was seen taping out a new trench on the left of the position ; a Lewis gun soon persuaded them to postpone the work, and they too went hurriedly back towards Pozières.

Daylight on 9th July showed Metcalfe that his position gave him a commanding view of Pozières and of the quarries between that village and Contalmaison. He sent back word of the heavy casualties which our artillery was causing and tried to attract the attention of a British contact aeroplane. But it was some hours before the situation was clearly understood, and "C" Company continued to suffer casualties. During the morning the battalion on its right withdrew to the true objective, followed by the Irish Fusiliers. Metcalfe nevertheless clung to his position. But in the afternoon small parties of the enemy worked their way forward from Pozières by short rushes. Enemy shelling increased ; yet "C" Company tried to beat off the counter-attack with rifle and Lewis-gun fire. By now there were very few unwounded survivors, and so Metcalfe, seeing that the Germans were working round both his flanks, collected all the unwounded men he could find into a shell hole ; they amounted to six in all, including Serjeant G. Chilton. This party kept up rifle fire on the advancing enemy until their retreat was nearly cut off. Metcalfe then told the party to make their way back as best they could to the true objective. Of the seven, only Metcalfe and Chilton succeeded in reaching the trench, which was now held by "A" Company. The Germans followed them up, but were driven back by "A" Company's Lewis gunners, under Second-Lieutenant C. F. Melling, who, although wounded, got up on the parapet and fired on them as they came along the trench.

At divisional headquarters the comment on the whole affair was that " officers in this brigade do not appear capable of reading their maps."

The battalion was relieved late on the night of 10th/11th July and marched to billets at Bouzincourt, which it reached at 7 a.m., moving on in the afternoon to Senlis. Its casualties had been 2 officers and 10 other ranks killed, 3 officers and 112 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 43 other ranks missing. Captain J. C. P. E. Metcalfe and Second-Lieutenant C. F. Melling received the Military Cross, and Serjeant G. Chilton the Italian Bronze Medal for Military Valour, for their valuable work on this occasion.

" They also serve who only stand and wait "

17TH, 18TH AND 20TH BNS.

Standing in the wings, as it were, the 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions also helped to earn the battle honour " Albert, 1916 "

by being in reserve under short notice to move into action at Bouzincourt, Aveluy Wood and near Bray-sur-Somme from 10th to 13th July.

Ovillers Again

19th Battalion

19TH BN. A slight northward swing of the limelight from the spot where the 11th Battalion took part in the fighting just described shows up the 19th Battalion making its last appearance as a normal infantry battalion before its conversion into a pioneer battalion, though by no means its last appearance in heavy fighting, as will be seen from the story of 1918. After the hammering which it received at Thiepval on 1st July, it withdrew to billets at Senlis. Here, owing to the heavy casualties, it was reorganized into two companies, No. 1 under Captain W. G. Haywood, and No. 2 under Captain S. A. Palk. On 8th July it moved to a reserve post near Ovillers and found carrying parties for the brigade. On the 11th it took over part of a line of captured trenches south and west of Ovillers and rather less than a mile from the scene of the 11th
16TH AND 19TH BNS. Battalion's action of 7th–9th July. No. 1 Company was on the right, No. 2 on the left, with the 16th Battalion next to it on its left. On 12th July the 19th Battalion was ordered to push farther east and to capture as much ground in the village of Ovillers as possible, and in particular an enemy strong point known as "Point 18" which lay almost due south of Ovillers Church. No. 1 Company was to attack Point 18, while No. 2, with strong patrols of the 16th Battalion, pushed due east and tried to gain a good footing in the village itself. The attack was timed for 11 p.m., and if Point 18 was not taken a further attack was to be delivered at 3 a.m. in co-operation with the 2nd South Lancashire Regiment. At 11 p.m. the two companies advanced. No. 1 had great difficulty in making any progress as the trenches leading to Point 18 were blocked by fallen trees and other obstacles. Nevertheless, storming parties moved forward until they came to a barricade put up by the enemy, where they came under heavy machine-gun fire and a shower of bombs and were forced to retire. A second attempt met with no better result. On the left, however, No. 2 Company succeeded in gaining possession of the village almost up to the church and dug themselves in securely.

At 3 a.m. on 13th July, as previously ordered, No. 1 Company renewed their attempt on Point 18. Two assaults were delivered, the second of which succeeded in rushing the barricade, but was immediately overwhelmed by fire from machine guns posted a short way behind it. The simultaneous attack of the 2nd South Lancashire Regiment was, however, a complete success. While the Germans in Point 18 were fully occupied with No. 1 Company of the 19th Lancashire Fusiliers, the South Lancashire attacked them in rear, with the result that the strong point and about a hundred yards of communication trench running east from it were captured.

At about 6 a.m. the enemy counter-attacked and temporarily drove back the South Lancashire ; but the situation was restored by the latter with the help of Lewis-gun fire from No. 1 Company, and Point 18 was never again lost. During this episode a party of Germans tried to retire across the new front occupied by No. 2 Company just south of Ovillers Church. Coming under Lewis-gun fire from the company, they surrendered to Palk, who went out himself to bring them in, although the Germans had by then turned their machine guns on their own men. The prisoners were 37 men of the Guard Fusiliers. For this incident and for its " exceptionally good work " throughout the operation, the battalion was commended by the Divisional Commander.

Further counter-attacks were made by the enemy on 14th July, but without success. On 15th July the battalion was withdrawn from the line to billets at Warloy Baillon. The fighting had cost the battalion 2 officers killed (Second-Lieutenants L. G. Longley and T. G. Mahoney), 1 wounded, and 40 other ranks killed or wounded, many of the latter being the bombers of No. 1 Company.

The Battle of Bazentin Ridge
14th to 17th July, 1916

11th, 15th and 16th Battalions

Second-Lieutenant M. A. Callaghan's D.S.O.

After three days of rest, spent in training and refitting at Senlis, 11TH BN. the 11th Battalion moved up on 14th July to trenches at La Boisselle where it was attached to the 7th Infantry Brigade as support. The brigade attacked Ovillers that evening, but without success. At 11 p.m. "A" and "B" Companies took part in a second attack, which also failed at about 2 a.m. on 15th July, owing to uncut wire. Their losses from machine-gun fire were considerable. Later in the day the battalion returned to La Boisselle, where it was in support to its own brigade, the 74th.

At 1.30 a.m. on 16th July the latter delivered an attack on the south-eastern edge of Ovillers which was partly successful. A neighbouring brigade also attacked, and one of its battalions, the 5th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, was cut off. It was decided that the 74th Brigade should try to reach them by means of bombing attacks. At about noon three bombing squads of the 11th Battalion were ordered up to make the attempt. Two of them, consisting of sixteen non-commissioned officers and men, were under the command of Second-Lieutenant M. A. Callaghan. They attacked the enemy with such a rain of rifle and hand grenades that the Germans were driven back into a strong point. But even here they could not withstand the bombers' onslaught, and at about 7.30 p.m. a German with a large white flag got out of the trench. Callaghan, followed by Lance-Corporal W. H. White, climbed on to the parapet and advanced on the flag-bearer, whereupon the garrison of the strong

point surrendered, to the number of 2 officers and 124 other ranks of the Prussian Guard Fusiliers. Callaghan then led his bombers round the strong point and succeeded in gaining touch with the beleaguered 5th Royal Warwickshire at 8 p.m. He was wounded during this operation, but remained at duty.

For their gallantry and good leadership Callaghan was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, a rare honour for so junior a subaltern, and White received the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

In Reserve

15TH AND 16TH BNS. The 15th and 16th Battalions also qualified for the battle honour "Bazentin" by being in support near La Boisselle and Aveluy respectively on 15th July.

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME—ENTRACTE

2nd/5th, 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions

While heavy fighting was being carried on by other troops elsewhere, several battalions of the regiment were involved in minor incidents towards the end of July, particularly the Bantam and Salford units.

18TH BN. On 21st July the 18th Battalion, which had taken over a sector of the trenches close to Trones Wood the day before, was attacked in the small hours of the morning by two lines of Germans, numbering about two hundred, who advanced under cover of a mist but were stopped by Lewis and machine-gun fire when fifty yards from the British line.

At 5 p.m. that day the brigadier (Brigadier-General J. W. Sandilands, C.M.G., D.S.O.) issued orders for the 18th Battalion to carry out a strong raid that night on a trench running from a point just south-east of Arrow Head Copse, close to Guillemont, to Maltz Horn Farm, about 1,200 yards south-west of that village. The object was to destroy the wire in front of the trench so that troops might pass it. To enable it to carry out the raid, the battalion was relieved in the front line by the 17th Battalion. The enemy interfered considerably with the relief by putting down a barrage, which lasted for two hours, on the front line and the area behind it. As a result, the relief was completed only ten minutes before the attack was due to begin, and the raiding parties had to form up in front of the parapet instead of in a valley behind the front line as had been intended. Moreover, the ground was strange to everybody, the warning order for the raid was only received at 6.30 p.m. and the company commanders did not receive detailed orders till midnight. As a final difficulty, the Germans became very suspicious seven minutes before the attack began and showed considerable activity, which included the firing of a number of red rockets.

At 1.30 a.m. the raiders advanced in two columns, separated by five hundred yards, with the object of getting through the wire

and into the German trench and working inwards. The right column reached the trench, but was forced to retire. The left column passed through the German front line and severely bombed the support line. Lieutenant M. R. Wood, though wounded, established two Lewis guns in two shell holes, with the help of Lance-Corporal Plant and twelve men. This party held on for five hours until it was nearly surrounded by the enemy, inflicting considerable loss on him and dispersing an attempted counter-attack. For his gallantry and good leadership, Lieutenant M. R. Wood was awarded the Military Cross. Corporal A. Pattie received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for dressing ten wounded men under heavy fire and carrying six of them to safety on his back.

18TH AND 20TH BNS.

On 24th and 25th July the 18th and 20th Battalions were involved in heavy shelling during a German attack on other units. The 20th were ordered to send up a company to prolong the line along the eastern edge of Trones Wood. Captain R. A. S. Coke led it out of the wood into the open. The enemy, evidently thinking that an attack was intended, put down a heavy bombardment which forced Coke to dig in. His trench was blown in; but he organized rescue parties, dug out men who had been buried and personally attended to the wounded. The German bombardment was in its turn thought to be the prelude to a German attack and two companies of the 18th were sent up as reinforcements. It was not, however, for thirty hours that Coke's company could be relieved and he stuck to his post throughout this time although wounded in the back by a shell splinter. He was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery and endurance.

17TH BN.

On 29th and 30th July the 17th Battalion provided 10 officers and 460 other ranks as carrying parties for the 89th Infantry Brigade in its attack on Guillemont.

19TH BN.

On 29th July the 19th Battalion left the 14th Infantry Brigade, 32nd Division, and was transferred to the 49th (West Riding) Division as its Pioneer Battalion.

17TH, 18TH AND 20TH BNS

On 1st August the 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions had the good fortune to be at rest in the area miscalled "Happy Valley," near Bray-sur-Somme, and held a combined Minden Day parade which was inspected by Brigadier-General Sandilands, who specially thanked them and congratulated them on their work.

2ND/5TH BN.

A much less comfortable Minden Day was spent by the 2nd/5th Battalion, which from 31st July to 5th August endured many outbursts of heavy shelling in the line near Arrow Head Copse, close to Guillemont. This tour of duty is, however, remarkable for several acts of gallantry by non-commissioned officers and men. A signaller, Private J. Atherton, earned the Distinguished Conduct Medal by repeatedly and on his own initiative going across the open under heavy fire in order to repair the only telephone line which was working in the brigade and to arrange lamp signalling with a neighbouring battalion. Corporal J. Newsham and Private T. Cooper were awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry

as stretcher-bearers. The former twice left his trench in full view of the enemy to attend to wounded men lying in the wire in front of it. The latter secured volunteers to carry wounded back to the aid post through a shelled area ; and at another time he remained for a long period in the open giving first aid to the wounded and putting them in such shelter as he could find. Private J. Eatough and Private W. Booth were awarded the Military Medal for digging out under heavy shell fire four men who had been buried by the explosion of a shell ; Eatough also carried a number of other wounded men to the dressing station under fire. The battalion was partially involved in an attack at Guillemont on 9th August, suffering serious losses but being given no definite role. Company Serjeant-Major F. Burns showed great gallantry in reorganizing his men after the attack and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

The Battle of Delville Wood

"DELVILLE WOOD"

10th Battalion

The battle honour " Delville Wood," associated for ever with the gallant achievements of the troops of the Union of South Africa, finds a place on the Colours of the Regiment owing to a raid carried
10TH BN. out by the 10th Battalion at that place on 12th August. Two days before, strong patrols had been sent out by the battalion and had gained contact with the enemy, who was very alert and aggressive, on a frontage of two hundred yards in the northern part of Delville Wood, establishing what the brigade commander in his records described as a "series of important posts," in readiness for an attack which was not, in the event, ordered. On 12th August a raiding party attacked and occupied a German trench at the south-east corner of the wood. Unfortunately, no details of this episode are available.

An Allied Enterprise

17TH BN. On 22nd August the 17th Battalion, commanded by Major F. J. F. Crook, took over a sector of the line at Angle Wood, 1,200 yards north-west of Maurepas, from two French infantry regiments. The relief was difficult, for the enemy joined in with a heavy bombardment, the ground was strange, and neither party could understand the other's language. Nevertheless it was carried through without a hitch and was completed by 2 a.m. on the 23rd. The front consisted of a chain of advanced posts in front of Angle Wood with continuous support and reserve lines behind it. As soon as the relief was complete, the two forward companies, "X" and "Y," made good use of the remaining hours of darkness to link up the posts by hard digging. It was fortunate they did so as the whole area occupied by the battalion received heavy shelling at intervals throughout the day.

Half a mile north-east of Angle Wood lay Falfemont Farm, at the end of a spur known as Falfemont Ridge. The farm had been turned by the Germans into a very highly fortified strong point. During 23rd August orders were received that an operation preliminary to an attack on Falfemont Ridge was to be carried out on the afternoon of the 24th. The French on the right were to attack Oakhanger Wood, six hundred yards north of Maurepas and the same distance east of Angle Wood, while the 104th British Infantry Brigade, which included the 17th Battalion, was to advance on their left and enter the German lines between Falfemont Farm and a point north-east of it. The 17th Battalion was to carry out this operation by sending forward strong patrols, followed by two companies. Although the operation was intended to secure a good starting line for the bigger attack, it really involved attacking the Germans' main second line with one battalion on a frontage of three hundred and fifty yards. As no unit on its left would be attacking, the battalion's left flank would have been completely in the air and exposed to the strong point at the farm, with a gap of six hundred yards in its left rear. Major Crook protested, but was overruled.

At 8.30 p.m. three companies of the Divisional Pioneer Battalion came up to dig assembly trenches on the hillside east of Angle Wood, where the 17th Battalion was to concentrate. Considerable confusion occurred owing to the enemy bombarding the whole of the front line and the back areas. The Pioneers, attempting to advance through the shelling, got lost. One company were led by a liaison officer into a German trench, which they approached from behind it, were challenged and fired on, and made their way with difficulty back to the British lines after a hand-to-hand fight. The other two companies split up and never reached their work. The result was that by daybreak on the 25th no assembly trenches had been dug, no preparations for the attack had been made, the battalion had concentrated east of Angle Wood as ordered, and the posts on its left flank were unoccupied. Nevertheless carrying parties of the 20th Battalion and of the 23rd Manchester Regiment established a dump of tools by midday, and the working parties had collected enough from the old trenches to begin converting shell holes into a continuous trench line.

During the morning Brigadier-General Sandilands visited the forward area. At noon the original orders were cancelled. Instead, the battalion was ordered to keep touch with the French as they advanced and at the same time to maintain connexion with the rest of the British line. Major Crook assembled his officers and told them his plan for giving effect to these orders. Two minutes after the French began their advance, "Y," "W" and "Z" Companies would advance in echelon at a hundred yards distance from each other, taking their direction from "Y" Company, which would be on the right and would be responsible for keeping in touch with the French second wave. When the latter halted, "Y" Company would halt, the remaining companies would conform, and all would

consolidate their positions and join up their lines. One machine gun was allotted to "Y" Company and two to "Z" Company for the protection of the left flank until contact with the unit on the left had been firmly established.

The French bombardment opened at 4.45 p.m. and lifted at 5.30 p.m., when the Allies advanced and gained all their objectives. At 5.32 p.m. "Y" Company (Captain W. Rennison) went forward over the crest of the slope, followed at their correct distances by "W" (Lieutenant W. D. Cheshire) and "Z" (Lieutenant W. E. M. Curnock) Companies. Captain Rennison's control was so good that perfect intervals and dressing were preserved throughout, in spite of considerable rifle and machine-gun fire. Major Crook's plan was carried out in its entirety and all three companies made themselves secure, in touch with the French. Fortunately, the German counter-bombardment came down too far back to cause much trouble. The troops worked through a hot and stifling night, and they were all under cover before morning. Throughout this operation perfect liaison between the battalion and the French (by means of runners and of corporals exchanged between the headquarters) and between the battalion and brigade headquarters (by means of carrier pigeons and runners) had been maintained. Private J. H. Birtwell was particularly successful in keeping touch with the French, showing untiring energy and determination under the heaviest shelling. Within the battalion Private S. Wall displayed great gallantry and intelligence in carrying messages and orders.

During the night of 24th/25th August the French gained the impression that Falfemont Farm was unoccupied. The 17th Battalion were ordered to send out a patrol to seize it. Thirty men and a Lewis-gun section from the reserve company, under Captain J. M. Cowan, went out at about 10 p.m. Shortly after they had started they met and captured two German patrols. Later, however, when within thirty yards of the farm, they suddenly came under heavy rifle and machine-gun fire and had to fall back, only to find that they had a concealed German trench behind them, barring their direct way. Cowan and his non-commissioned officers covered the retirement until all of them were either killed or wounded, but only eleven men made their escape. The rest of the party were taken prisoner.

As a result of this fighting, the Germans put down a heavy bombardment at 6 a.m. on the 25th on Angle Wood and the new advanced line. The shelling continued at intervals throughout the day, culminating in a very heavy burst from 8.15 to 9.30 p.m. The battalion was relieved that night and went into reserve.

Congratulations on its work were received from the Divisional Commander, Major-General R. J. Pinney, C.B., and the Brigade Commander, Brigadier-General J. W. Sandilands, C.M.G., D.S.O. Major F. J. F. Crook was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, Captain W. Rennison the Military Cross, and Privates J. H. Birtwell and S. Wall the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Serjeant T. M.

Forrester was later awarded this Medal for good work throughout the Battle of the Somme and for the operations near Falfemont Farm in particular.

The Battle of Pozières Ridge

"POZIÈRES"

The share of the Regiment in this struggle, which lasted from 23rd July to 3rd September, was confined to the participation of the 19th Battalion, as Pioneer Battalion of the 49th Division, in an unsuccessful attack north of Thiepval Wood on 3rd September and the presence of the 11th Battalion in the line and in support near Thiepval and Ovillers between 20th August and 3rd September. 19TH BN. 11TH BN.

The Battle of Ginchy
9th September, 1916

"GINCHY"

2nd/5th Battalion

The loss of 16 officers (all but three of those who went over the top) and 334 other ranks of the 2nd/5th Battalion was the price which the Regiment paid for the battle honour "Ginchy." 2ND/5TH BN.

After a period of rest, this battalion on 7th September took over a tangle of trenches lying between Delville Wood, Trones Wood and Ginchy. Half its line faced east, half north, but the term "line" is an exaggeration as the position consisted of unconnected and shallow trenches which could only be reached at night. Ironical thoughts of the good brews of the battalion's home towns must have been evoked by the names of the trenches in this area—Stout Trench, Pilsen Lane, Vat Alley, Hop Alley, Ale Alley and Pint Trench. The carrying out of the relief caused some anxious moments as there was nothing to prevent parties from walking straight into the enemy positions in some places.

However, it was safely accomplished with little shelling but with the loss, through a fatal wound, of Captain J. W. Hedley, one of the battalion's original officers. The next day passed quietly, though enemy snipers in shell holes caused some trouble.

On 9th September the 164th Infantry Brigade, to which the 2nd/5th Battalion belonged, was ordered to co-operate in an attack by the 16th (Irish) Division on Ginchy, by capturing Ale Alley and Pint Trench, which lay to the north-west of that village, the former running east and west, the latter north and south. The 2nd 5th Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel R. W. Fox, was to furnish the second and third waves of the brigade attack, "X" (Lieutenant T. H. G. Kenderdine) and "Y" (Lieutenant S. Cooper) Companies being allotted to the second wave and "W" (Lieutenant A. Maw) and "Z" (Captain N. Hall) to the third. The plan involved several difficulties, not least of which was the fact that one company had to file into the trench occupied by another after the first wave

five hundred yards farther north lay the formidable Zollern Redoubt, with Zollern Trench running south-west from it ; while six hundred yards beyond that was Stuff Redoubt, with Hessian Trench running to it from the east and in a curve south-west and west from it. Diagonally across all these trenches lay Midway Trench, which had originally been called Mouquet Switch because it joined Mouquet Farm to Schwaben Redoubt and had evidently been intended as a second line of defence in case Thiepval fell to attacks delivered frontally against it.

The line which was taken over by the 9th Battalion and which was to be its starting-line for the attack on 26th September was known as Constance Trench ; but it was a trench in name only, for the troops found merely shallow slits, in some cases shell holes, with wide gaps between them.

On 25th September Lieutenant-Colonel Da Costa gave out his plan of attack to his company commanders and the battalion grenadier officer at a conference, confirming it with written orders early the following morning, when he also went round the line and discussed with them in detail their arrangements for the operation. The battalion, in common with the 8th Northumberland Fusiliers on the right and another unit on the left, had three objectives : the first was High Trench, the second Zollern Redoubt and Zollern Trench, the third Stuff Redoubt and Hessian Trench. The task was not easy : Mouquet Farm was an awkward obstacle at the start, and the fact that the objectives did not lie parallel to the starting-line involved dangerous changes of direction during the advance. It was decided not to delay the whole operation until the farm had been captured, but to keep its occupants down while the assault passed over the ruins and to use the other troops to " liquidate " them later. At 12.35 p.m. a heavy barrage was put down on the German position for four minutes, after which it crept forward on a timed programme as a screen in front of the infantry. At 12.39 p.m. Lieutenant J. C. B. Harris, with his bombers and a weak platoon of " W " Company, dashed forward to deal with the farm, leaving a party in Constance Trench to give support. One party made for the northern entrance to the cellars which had been stated by the brigadier to be in a rubble heap. They found the Germans actually in position on the rubble heap, but successfully engaged them and undoubtedly helped the right company to get beyond the farm. Another party saw no Germans, but threw bombs down what they took to be exits from the cellar, and it was certainly the case that no Germans emerged from them. After the companies had advanced, Harris's party became involved in a confused scuffle round the rubble heap. They suffered many casualties, including Harris himself, who was wounded, and all the senior non-commissioned officers. The survivors were eventually absorbed by the 11th Manchester Regiment and the 6th East Yorkshire Regiment which, with the help of a tank, finally induced the garrison of 1 officer and 55 men to surrender at 6.30 p.m.

In the meanwhile the companies had been advancing, "X" on the right, "Y" in the centre and "Z" on the left, dividing the battalion frontage equally between them, and moving in column of platoons at twenty paces' distance with the men extended to about five paces. "W" Company, less the platoon allotted to Mouquet Farm, followed in rear of "Y" Company, with the special roles of supporting "Z" Company at the gravel-pit in High Trench and "X" Company at Zollern Redoubt.

"X" Company (Captain J. F. Hoyland, who was killed later in the day) got into difficulties as soon as it had passed the farm and suffered severely from enfilade fire coming from High Trench. The rear platoon, under Second-Lieutenant E. E. Lamb, seems to have been diverted to the right to deal with this threat. Some fire was also coming from near the farm, and Privates G. Lyon and B. Brierley did gallant work singlehanded in subduing it. When Lyon's supply of bombs was exhausted he used his rifle at close range and prevented the enemy from firing into the backs of the advancing troops. But in the meanwhile Lamb and his party had been killed or wounded to a man, and "X" Company had practically ceased to exist. A serious gap thus occurred between the battalion and the 8th Northumberland Fusiliers at a critical place where Zollern and Stuff Redoubts would later have to be dealt with.

"Y" Company (Lieutenant M. W. B. Deane) in the centre also suffered severely owing to its right being exposed to enfilade fire through the destruction of "X" Company, and as it advanced farther towards the first objective it not only came under fire from somewhere behind it but was also caught by our own barrage. "Z" Company (Captain E. C. Longworth) on the left was more fortunate and reached the first objective in excellent order and with slight casualties. The reserve company, "W" (Captain E. H. Davies), following behind "Y," shared the latter's troubles, and part of it had to be diverted to deal with the Germans who were still active between Mouquet Farm and the first objective, High Trench. Just before the company began its advance, Davies received a message, not intended for him, which caused him to take command of an advanced dump. When he found out the mistake he hurried forward in search of his company and blundered into the Germans holding the Zollern Redoubt, who took him prisoner.

"Y" and "Z" Companies reached the first objective at about 12.50 p.m. They found a considerable number of the enemy in High Trench and dealt with them by bomb and bayonet; but the pause of ten minutes on this objective allowed in the plan was not long enough for the "mopping-up" process to be finished, and, even when special parties were left behind for that purpose, some Germans were able to fire into the backs of the troops as they advanced to the second objective. Advantage was taken of the pause to extend "Y" Company's front somewhat to the right so as to cover part of the gap left by "X" Company.

The advance to the second objective was carried out in satisfactory order. But the right, already weak and bent back, came under very severe machine-gun fire from Zollern and Stuff Redoubts. This had the effect of increasing the gap towards the 8th Northumberland Fusiliers. "Z" Company on the left met with serious opposition from Midway Trench, where several enemy trench mortars were in position, and from Hessian Trench. Violent fighting ensued, in which Captain E. C. Longworth and Lieutenant P. S. B. Schooling were killed. The Germans resisted stoutly and left many killed and wounded in the trenches, in the open and in the dug-outs in which some of them had taken refuge. Six trench mortars were abandoned by the Germans in this area ; round them were found several of their dead, with some of the 9th Battalion. During this phase also the battalion lost its Medical Officer, Captain G. P. Selby, Royal Army Medical Corps, who was killed by a bullet whilst he was attending to wounded in the open under fire.

When the second objective was reached about 1.20 p.m., only one officer and not more than a hundred and fifty men survived of those who had left Constance Trench less than three-quarters of an hour before. As a result of the heavy casualties incurred on the right, the bulk of the survivors were grouped towards the extreme left of Zollern Trench, in which some opposition was met and dealt with. The men dug themselves in where the trench did not exist or had been blown in ; and "Z" Company's Lewis-gun section did useful work as a covering party.

As Lieutenant-Colonel Da Costa had been ordered to keep his headquarters on the Ovillers road close to Pozières Cemetery, he had established an observation post behind the assaulting troops, under the battalion intelligence officer, Second-Lieutenant J. Hayes, who sent back the most valuable information throughout the operation, being very ably and gallantly helped by Private G. Temple both in collecting information and in taking it back to battalion headquarters. Hayes was confident that he saw some men of the 9th Battalion at the appointed hour advancing from the second to the third objective ; and brigade headquarters gained the impression by 6.25 p.m., from the somewhat confused reports of wounded, that the goal had been reached. It seems certain that Second-Lieutenant H. W. Potter and a few men did advance towards Hessian Trench, but they were too few to have made any impression in face of the determined resistance of the enemy. No trace of the party was found until some weeks later, when it was learned that Potter had been wounded in three places and was a prisoner in Germany. The situation therefore at the end of the day was that the western end of Zollern Trench, the second objective, was firmly held, but the rest of it and Zollern Redoubt were still in enemy hands.

When it was reported to him that troops had reached the second objective, the brigadier, under the impression that Zollern Redoubt had been captured, ordered the headquarters of the 8th Northumberland Fusiliers and 9th Lancashire Fusiliers to move up to it. Lieu-

tenant-Colonel Da Costa advanced, but became separated from the Northumberland Fusiliers party while going through a German barrage. He made a detour to the left to avoid the fighting still raging round Mouquet Farm, but came under machine-gun fire which scattered his party so that they too were separated. On nearing Zollern Redoubt he found the way completely blocked by the enemy to his front and to his right. When it was clear that the Redoubt was still held by the Germans, he decided to go back to his original headquarters close to Pozières and to try to reorganize his staff. The effect of this fruitless journey was that for seven hours he was cut off from his battalion and that not until nearly daybreak on the 27th September did he succeed in reassembling his headquarters and his means of communication.

The beginning of that day found only about sixty men of the former companies still left, but they were undaunted and took steps to clear Zollern Trench to the eastwards. In this they were largely successful and managed to establish a good defensive position. On the 28th the battalion was relieved and went first to dug-outs at Ovillers and two days later to billets at Varennes.

Its losses had been nearly four hundred. In return, Second-Lieutenant J. Hayes was awarded the Military Cross and Private G. Temple the Distinguished Conduct Medal for their work in transmitting information; Private G. Lyon also received this Medal and Private B. Brierley the Military Medal for their gallantry in the struggle near Mouquet Farm; and Company Serjeant-Major W. Wilson was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his splendid example in remaining with his company throughout the operations, although wounded.

A Minor Operation near Thiepval.

To the west of the 9th Battalion, the Battle of Thiepval Ridge had been largely a success. Thiepval itself had fallen; and on the morning of 28th September the 18th Division attacked in a northerly direction from the village, their objective being Schwaben Redoubt and some trenches about six hundred yards north of Thiepval. As the attack passed across part of the line at the edge of Thiepval Wood held by the 11th Battalion, the latter had a good view of the advancing waves. The attack in the main achieved its purpose, though the Germans managed to hold parts of the Redoubt. 11TH BN.

At 4.45 p.m. the 74th Infantry Brigade received a message from the 18th Division reporting that the enemy were retiring down their front line towards the River Ancre, to the west of the area covered by their attack. The brigadier ordered the 11th Battalion to send an officer's patrol to verify this statement and if possible to occupy the enemy's trenches and exploit any success towards the river. Three patrols, each of thirty men and a Lewis-gun detachment, were detailed, two from "D" Company (Captain R. Ganly, M.C.) and one from "C" Company. They were commanded by Captain

Ganly, Second-Lieutenant W. Morris, and Second-Lieutenant S. O. Hetherington.

The patrols assembled shortly before 6 p.m. Ganly's patrol moved along a trench to a point where it was badly knocked about, when they were prevented from advancing farther in that direction by the fire of our own Stokes mortars which was coming down a short distance ahead. The patrol thereupon left the trench, followed by Morris's party, and made a dash towards the German lines. When about half of Morris's men had left the trench, a German machine gun was seen coming into action on top of the parapet some distance away. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel L. G. Bird, who had supervised all the preparations for the operation and was present in the forward trench, at once ordered the rest of the party to stay in the trench and to open fire. He also ordered the Lewis-gun section and riflemen of Hetherington's patrol, which had just come up, to fire on the enemy gun. The latter was soon silenced and taken down. In the meanwhile Ganly's and the first half of Morris's patrols had entered the German trench and, working their way along it, killed the machine gunners and captured their gun. They then pushed farther east and established a block at the point of a salient in the trench known as Pope's Nose. Serjeant A. E. Owen did very valuable work in this stage and disposed of a number of the enemy. The third patrol under Hetherington also went across the open and entered the German lines still farther to the east. By about 6.45 p.m. all three patrols had joined hands. Twenty-one prisoners were taken and sent back. Morris was wounded in the leg, but remained at duty until late at night

The parties exploited their success westward towards the River Ancre and northward along the communication trenches leading to the enemy's close-support line, blocks being established at suitable places and touch gained with the 18th Division. Twenty more prisoners were captured during the night ; and a quantity of maps and an unopened mail-bag full of letters were found in a dug-out by the intelligence section under Second-Lieutenant G. A. Potts. Early on the morning of the 29th the enemy seemed to be holding their support line strongly, and the most advanced block was therefore withdrawn slightly so that a strong position might be consolidated. On his way back at this stage, Captain R. Ganly, who had led the attack with great coolness and had previously done much excellent work, especially at Vimy Ridge on 15th May, 1916, was shot through the head by a sniper. Second-Lieutenant S. O. Hetherington also died from a shell wound received in the forward trench ; and about twenty-five non-commissioned officers and men were killed or wounded.

Major-General E. G. T. Bainbridge, C.B , commanding the 25th Division, wrote in the margin of the Commanding Officer's report, " This was a capital action," and ordered Ganly's name to be put forward for a Mention in Despatches, which it received in January, 1917. Serjeant A. E. Owen was awarded the Distinguished Conduct

Medal and Serjeant J. Crook the Military Medal for their work on this occasion. The signallers, too, gained recognition in the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Lance-Corporal A. Fletcher, who, having had his lamp smashed by a shell, searched the captured trench till he found a German electric torch, which he used to keep up communication with the original front line throughout the operation. Later he rescued a wounded man.

The Battle of Transloy Ridges
1st to 18th October, 1916

"LE TRANSLOY"

2nd Battalion

Farther to the east, steady pressure had forced the Germans slowly back and a salient had been formed which threatened their last completed line of resistance. The British losses had, however, been heavy, the troops were exhausted, and rain had begun to make the shell-ploughed land impossible for further operations. Near the point of the salient, between Lesboeufs and Le Transloy, there was a dent in the British line ; and before winter set in it was desired to straighten out the position and to obtain possession of the ridges near Le Transloy, which would give the British observation over the enemy positions. One of the Regular Battalions, the 2nd, under 2ND BN the command of Major R. R. Willis, V.C., was given a role in this scene of the closing act of the drama.

After its disastrous experiences on 1st July, it had rested for three weeks in the back area and then gone north by rail for training near Poperinghe. On 25th July it had suffered a great loss in the departure of Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. B. Freeth, C.M.G., D.S.O., on his well-deserved promotion to command the 167th (London) Infantry Brigade in the 56th (1st London) Division. From 4th August to 17th September it carried out routine tours of duty in the line near Ypres, going thence by train to the rear of the Somme area once more.

On 8th October it marched from Corbie to Citadel Camp, Fricourt, mainly by tracks across country which were none too good by now. On 9th October, by still worse and more exhausting tracks, it moved to Trones Wood. That night it relieved the Queen's Westminster Rifles in the brigade commanded by Brigadier-General Freeth, who met and chatted with some of the officers. The trenches taken over lay half-way between Gueudecourt and Lesboeufs ; but as they represented the limit of the recent attacks, they were naturally as yet incomplete and the exact position of friend and foe was uncertain. A difficult relief was made still more complicated and exhausting by brigade headquarters specifying which companies of the 2nd Battalion were to hold the various sectors ; as this allotment differed from that laid down by Major Willis, who had assumed that such a domestic matter would have been left to his discretion in the usual

way, many hours were spent in marching and counter-marching in accordance with the various orders and counter-orders and in trying to wed guides to companies and companies to tasks. As the Germans knew from the experience of two years how useful were the sunken roads near Lesboeufs for the movement of troops, they added to the confusion by shelling them heavily. It was thus a weary unit which faced the heavy shelling of 10th and 11th October.

On the 11th the second-in-command, Major A. J. W. Blencowe, assembled the four company commanders, Captain W. D. P. Mansell, Captain W. P. Salt, Lieutenants V. F. S. Hawkins, M.C., and M Robinson, and explained to them the outline plan of the forthcoming operations and the dispositions of the line as then held, from which it appeared that, between the battalion and the 2nd Duke of Wellington's Regiment on the right, a stretch of trench was held by the enemy. The party returned to battalion headquarters and waited for Major Willis, who arrived at 3 p.m., having raced a 5.9-inch shell for the last few feet. He gave them his orders. The battalion, in conjunction with French and with other British troops, was to attack next day, 12th October, its objective being part of a ridge which lay about 1,500 yards in front of the existing line and half-way between it and Le Transloy. The attack was to be in eight waves, of which the first four were to take the objective, push patrols forward and dig in, while the remainder were to follow them and dig a support trench two hundred yards in rear of the objective. Four machine guns and four trench mortars were allotted to the battalion. "A" and "C" Companies had been pushing saps forward from their line ; these would be joined up during the night and, with a forward piece of trench already held, would form the battalion's assembly position, in which it was to be ready at 5.15 a.m. There would be a bombardment from 6 a.m. till zero (which was fixed for 2.25 p.m., but not known to company commanders until 12 noon), allowing twenty minutes for the Duke of Wellington's on the right to clear the intervening pocket of the enemy. Major Willis left it to the discretion of the company commanders whether they left their trenches at zero and lay in shell holes in front of them till the time came for them to advance or whether they stayed in their trenches and carried out the whole attack from there, their decision to be based on the intensity and position of the British and German barrages and machine-gun fire.

There was some confusion in getting the companies into position, but by 6 a.m. the battalion had occupied its assembly trenches. At 12.30 p.m. twelve Germans came over and surrendered ; shortly before 2 p.m. about twenty Germans ran over with their hands up, apparently very demoralized—ten reached their goal, the rest were killed ; a few minutes later another small party was seen to leave their trenches and then to run back into them. These incidents gave the impression that the morale of the enemy about to be attacked was not high, but they must have had full warning of the attack, as two German aeroplanes flew low over the battalion's

assembly trenches at 2.3 p.m. and must have seen that they were crowded with troops.

At zero the two right companies, "A" (Lieutenant M. Robinson) and "B" (Lieutenant V. F. S. Hawkins) decided to leave their trenches and to lie in shell holes; they did so with few casualties. "C" (Second-Lieutenant J. W. Watkins) and "D" (Captain W. D. P. Mansell) Companies stayed in their trenches till 2.25 p.m., by which time the enemy machine guns were firing furiously; they were caught in this fire the moment they advanced. Hawkins noticed as soon as he advanced that there was a small isolated trench between the lines, manned by about twenty Germans with two machine guns, which had escaped the barrage. This party inflicted very heavy casualties and held up the advance as it could pour enfilade fire along the right companies and cause considerable damage to the left. Small isolated parties of "B" and "C" Companies in the centre, including one very gallantly led by Second-Lieutenant W. C. Bolton, managed to get past this trench and pushed about two hundred yards farther on and dug in at about 3 p.m. Unfortunately, they were later cut off and either all killed or captured. The situation at this time was graphically described by Hawkins:—

"2.50 p.m. Fifty per cent. of company already down. Whole Brigade appears to be held up. L./Cpl. Fenton, one of my Lewis gunners, has got his gun going in a shell hole on my left. Awful din, can hardly hear it. Yelled at Sjt. Manin to take the first wave on. He's lying just behind me. Hodgkinson says he's dead. Sjt. Mann on my right, of 7 Platoon, also dead. Most of the men appear to be dead. Shout at the rest and get up to take them on. Find myself sitting on the ground facing our own line with a great hole in my thigh . . . Hodgkinson also hit in the wrist. Awful din still. Most of the Company now out. . . . I put my tie round my leg as a tourniquet. Fortescue about five yards on my right still alive. . Yell at him to come over to me. Show him my leg and tell him to carry on. He gets into a shell hole to listen while I tell him what to do. Shot through the heart while I'm talking to him. Addison also wounded and crawling back to our lines. That's all the officers and most of the N.C.Os Can't see anything of Serjeant Bolton and 8 Platoon. . . ."

Company Serjeant-Major Laverick took command of Hawkins's company, but could only collect about twelve men.

Elsewhere Watkins with about fifteen men were doing their best to hold on to what they had. Second-Lieutenant S. W. Howarth reported at 5.25 p.m. that he was in a shell hole a hundred yards in front of the starting-line with four men, a Lewis gun and two rifles. At about the same time, Serjeant W. Russell reported that he had about forty men, but no N.C.Os., of "D" Company eighty yards in front of this line; at 6 p.m. he reported that the Germans seemed to have been reinforced and that he had only eleven men left.

At 7.30 p.m. the brigade commander ordered a combined raid to be made that night to expel the enemy from the small trench which had held up the advance and to clear up the situation. Major Willis pointed out at 8.50 p.m. that he now had only two officers

and eighty men left, and that these were unlikely to produce the desired result. The project was abandoned, and steps were taken to collect the survivors and to consolidate such progress as had been possible. Eventually about 130 men were brought together, the losses having been 4 officers and 62 other ranks killed, 6 officers and 162 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 100 other ranks missing.

Amongst the many acts of gallantry performed that day, mention must be made of Private J. Benson who, with two other men, carried his machine gun into a shell hole in No Man's Land, where he fired continuously and inflicted severe casualties on the enemy. Further, he shot seven Germans with his rifle. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

The next day was spent in the line under heavy shell fire. Patrols were sent out at night to verify persistent rumours that the small enemy trench was unoccupied, but they found it still held. At 3 a.m. on 14th October the battalion was relieved and moved to reserve trenches at Bernafay Wood.

Le Transloy Again

2nd Battalion

2ND BN. Yet a third time the 2nd Battalion was to endure destruction in the Somme battle.

Its losses on 12th October were partly made good by the arrival on 17th October of a draft of 176 non-commissioned officers and men from the 5th and 6th (Territorial) Reserve Battalions of the Regiment. On the 19th Major C. J. Burke, D.S.O., Royal Irish Regiment, took over command of the battalion, which moved forward that day to reserve trenches known as "John Bull" and "Cow," south-east of Flers. For three days it was employed in digging trenches. On 22nd October it moved to Thistle Trench, close to Lesboeufs, its assembly trenches for the big attack on 23rd October.

The battalion, with the 2nd Essex Regiment on its right and the 1st King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment on its left, was to attack and take part of Dewdrop Trench to the south-east of the sunken road which joined Lesboeufs to Le Transloy. Included in this objective were several subsidiary trenches, one of which was called Rainy Trench. Dewdrop Trench lay about four hundred and fifty yards from the British front line. When it had been captured, the other units were to go forward to another objective, while the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers took over and consolidated the whole of Dewdrop.

The strength of the battalion available for the attack was no more than 5 officers and 250 other ranks, with 48 more in battalion reserve. "A" Company was commanded by Second-Lieutenant T. E. Parry, "B" by Second-Lieutenant R. N. Higson, "C" by Second-Lieutenant F. G. S. Watson—all three of whom were killed that day—and "D" by Second-Lieutenant J. W. Watkins, who had

been transferred to it on Captain W. D. P. Mansell being killed on 12th October.

The attack was to take place in four waves. Lieutenant-Colonel Burke felt that its real difficulty would arise after the 2nd Essex had passed on from Dewdrop Trench and his line had to be extended and that position consolidated. He therefore left Captain W. P. Salt in the assembly trench with twenty-five non-commissioned officers and men of the reserve, with the role of directing them on any portion of Dewdrop Trench which might not have been cleared of the enemy and of generally helping in its consolidation and the reorganization of the troops in it.

The attack had been timed for 11.30 a.m., but at that hour a thick fog lay over the ground. In March, 1918, the Germans carried out their most successful attacks in fog and mist. But on 23rd October, 1916, the attack was postponed till the weather was clear, and at 2.30 p.m. the battalion went over with a loud cheer, and had to "double" in order to catch up the creeping barrage, which appeared to begin a minute too soon. The German "S.O.S." went up practically at zero. Enemy machine guns opened fire immediately on the assaulting troops; their artillery began a few moments later to search the roads behind the British lines so as to prevent the arrival of reinforcements.

Before many yards had been covered, men began to fall fast from the machine-gun fire. A few, however, under Second-Lieutenant J. W. Watkins, with a Lewis-gun team, managed to get within eighty or a hundred yards of Rainy Trench, but were there held up At 3.30 p.m. he reported to Salt where he was, and added that the attack appeared to have failed and that the troops on his right had fallen back. This message, the first news of the attack to arrive, reached the battalion headquarters at 5.10 p.m. Shortly after 5.30 p.m. the situation appeared to be that Watkins and fifteen men had dug themselves into a new trench in front of Rainy Trench, that Salt had thirty men (including all the unwounded men he could find) in the front line, and that the rest of the battalion reserve close by had dwindled to some twenty men as a result of losses. In short, there were 2 officers and 65 men left to the battalion in formed bodies out of the 6 officers and 298 men in the line at 2.30 p.m. All were tired; some were exhausted.

At about the same time, Lieutenant-Colonel Burke received information that the 2nd Essex Regiment had two companies digging in on its final objective, and that another was about to attack Dewdrop Trench from the east. He also received a message from 12th Brigade urging the supreme need of capturing Dewdrop. At 5.50 p.m. therefore he ordered that every available man should be used to attack and clear Rainy Trench and then to push on to Dewdrop. No sooner had he done so than he discovered that the information about the Essex was not true; and he received orders to clear up the situation and to re-form his line in conjunction with the Essex and the King's Own in readiness for an attack on Dewdrop.

in which the 2nd Seaforth Highlanders of the 10th Infantry Brigade were to help. At 6.15 p.m. he cancelled the attack orders which he had issued at 5.50 p.m., and went forward to see for himself how things stood. He found what he described as "a good deal of debris of units." In the front line he came upon Salt, who had collected nearly all the unwounded men and had extended them to link up with the troops on the right and left. Thanks to the leadership of Salt and Watkins, these survivors were in good spirits.

The situation as regards Rainy and Dewdrop Trenches was still obscure, and at 7.45 p.m. Watkins took out fifteen men to find out whether there were any British troops in them. After vigorous efforts to get information he came back with a definite report that they were both held by the enemy. During the night the trench dug by Watkins's party during the afternoon was extended to join that of the King's Own, with the effect that three hundred yards of trench were held by eighty men and five Lewis guns. Lieutenant-Colonel Burke ordered the digging of a communication trench from the original line to this new trench.

The net result of the day's operations was an advance of a hundred and fifty yards at the cost of 3 officers and 205 other ranks killed, wounded and missing. The total casualties between the 10th October and 25th October—when the battalion was relieved and marched to the brickworks at Montauban—had been 16 officers and 542 other ranks. The only officers left on the 24th were Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Burke, D.S.O., Major A. J. W. Blencowe, M.C., Lieutenant G. C. Martin, M.C. (the adjutant), Major W. Bowes (the quartermaster), Second-Lieutenant J. W. Watkins, and Captain W. P. Salt, who, however, was killed by a shell on the afternoon of that day together with a captain of the 1st Middlesex Regiment which was relieving the battalion. The actual number brought out of the line by Watkins, whose splendid work was a foretaste of his achievements as commanding officer of this battalion, was forty-six all ranks.

The Battle of Ancre Heights
1st October to 11th November, 1916

"ANCRE HEIGHTS"

11th Battalion

11TH BN. The last important attack in the Battle of the Somme carried out by the Regiment fell to the lot of the 11th Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel L. G. Bird. After its successful little operation at Thiepval Wood on 28th and 29th September, 1916, the battalion went to Bouzincourt for training until 6th October, when it relieved 11th Cheshire Regiment in Hessian Trench east of Thiepval. The next three days were spent in digging during attacks by the Canadian Corps. From 10th to 13th October it was in support near Mouquet Farm, and then again took over the line, "A" and "B" Companies till the 16th, "D" Company till the

17th, and "C" Company remaining in until the attack on 21st October. On the 17th Second-Lieutenants H. C. Stead and H. F. Heath took out patrols to examine the state of the enemy's wire in front of the objective, and obtained useful information. Stead found himself right through the German wire without knowing it until bombs were thrown at him. On the following night similar patrols were taken out by Captain H. H. Fowkes, M.C., and Second-Lieutenant G. A. Potts. Like Stead, Fowkes penetrated the German wire without realizing it, and actually got into the enemy's trench before he grasped the situation. He was then spotted and pelted with bombs. A man with him was wounded and taken prisoner. He himself, finding that he was not followed, turned back and searched for the man for about an hour, being again spotted and bombed, so that he had to abandon his attempt.

As we have seen, Thiepval had fallen and the line ran roughly east and west along the Thiepval–Courcelette ridge. In the right sector of the trenches, held by the 25th Division, in which the 11th Battalion was, the British had observation over the Ancre Valley towards Grandcourt. But on the left, from Stuff Redoubt westwards, the Germans were on the crest of the ridge and therefore had the observation. Stuff Redoubt and Hessian Trench had been captured, but the situation was still unsatisfactory. The operations of 21st October were therefore designed to take Regina Trench, which would give the British the desired domination. The starting-line was to be Hessian Trench, which had been the objective of the 9th Battalion in the Battle of Thiepval Ridge on 26th September, 1916. The distance between Hessian and Regina Trenches varied from two to five hundred yards. The attack was to have taken place on 19th October, but, owing to heavy rain throughout the night before, the trenches and ground surfaces were in such a bad state that it had to be postponed till 21st October.

The 11th Battalion's objective was a stretch of Regina Trench five hundred yards long. As Hessian Trench east of Stuff Redoubt was very narrow, the battalion was drawn up at Ovillers Post on the afternoon of 20th October in the order in which it was to attack. The first wave was to consist of "B" Company (Captain H. H. Fowkes, M.C.) in line on the right, and "C" Company (Captain J. C. P. E. Metcalfe, M.C.) in line on the left; the second of "A" Company (Captain W. I. Edwards, M.C.) in line with half the battalion bombers on each flank; and the third of "D" Company (Captain R. F. MacKinnon, M.C.), also in line with two reserve Lewis-gun teams and two sections of the 74th Brigade Machine Gun Company. Two trench mortars were allotted the task of dealing with strong points on the right of the objective.

After organizing itself thus, the battalion, which numbered four hundred, drew bombs, sandbags and similar stores from "K" Dump at Ovillers. Thence it made its way to Hessian Trench, the last party reaching its position about 3 a.m. on the 21st. The

rest of the night was spent in improving the trenches and the means of advance from them. The night was fine with a sharp frost which left the ground hard. But by daybreak all was ready. As the greater part of the objective could not be seen from Hessian Trench owing to the shape of the ridge, bearings were taken on the flanks of the advance and the central direction marked with old rifles stuck in the ground.

Shortly after midday the artillery barrage opened and the assaulting wave left Hessian Trench and moved up to it, followed at a distance of thirty yards by the second and third waves. At fixed intervals the barrage lifted until it finally settled on a line about two hundred yards beyond Regina Trench. The waves kept close to it and suffered a number of casualties in consequence. When it lifted from Regina Trench, the leading wave rushed in. The majority of the garrison surrendered and seemed to have been taken more or less by surprise, as many had no equipment on and others were found in "funk-holes" still covered by groundsheets. But the enemy showed fight in two parts of the trench. On the extreme right thirty men under an officer resisted with rifle and bomb. A Lewis gun was brought into action against them on the parapet; and a bombing party, led by Second-Lieutenant R. K. Beswick with Corporal J. Skelhorn as his leading bayonet man, worked down the trench. When about half the enemy party had been killed or wounded, Beswick himself killing four, the rest surrendered and were sent back to Hessian Trench. Beswick's party then resumed its advance and joined up with a party of the 8th Norfolk Regiment which had been co-operating on the right. The other centre of resistance lay in the left centre of the objective, where a dozen Germans held out. After a few bombs had killed some of them, the remainder surrendered. During this fighting a large number of German stick bombs were found and used against the enemy.

It was now 12.50 p.m. and the whole objective had been captured and touch gained with the Norfolks on the right and the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment on the left, thanks largely to the energy of Lieutenant-Colonel Bird, under whose supervision Lewis-gun teams and snipers were then pushed out about fifty to seventy yards in front of the captured positions, five posts in all being established on the battalion front, one or two of which had to be slightly withdrawn later as they came under the British barrage. The work of the signallers had been excellent. When a man carrying a basket of pigeons was hit in the open, another man recovered it and brought the birds safely to Regina Trench, whence a message was sent to divisional headquarters announcing the success of the attack. Consolidation was begun at once and was not interfered with by the enemy until next morning. He then began a constant shelling which continued until 4 p.m., when the battalion was relieved. Much damage and some casualties were caused by it. The men were very short of water and food that day, but nevertheless they continued to work cheerfully and were rewarded by some hot soup

which they found waiting for them at Ovillers Post, provided by Lieutenant and Quartermaster J. Bowyer, whose excellent work throughout the Battle of the Somme earned him a Military Cross in the New Year's Honours of 1917.

Immediate awards of honours included those of the Distinguished Service Order to Lieutenant-Colonel L. G. Bird who had remained at duty and been an inspiring example to all although he had been wounded the day before the attack; of the Military Cross to Second-Lieutenant R. K. Beswick, to the Medical Officer, Captain W. McFarlane, R.A.M.C., and to the Chaplain, the Rev. M. S. Evers, who made frequent journeys through the German shelling to Regina Trench during the afternoon and night after the attack, of the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Company Serjeant-Major T. Higgins of "A" Company, who, although wounded, continued to lead his men with great courage and determination; and of the Military Medal to Corporal J. Skelhorn, of Beswick's bombing party, and to Privates J. Bee, P. Garry and H. L. Settle. The battalion, with the rest of the 74th Brigade, was paraded a few days later to be congratulated by General Sir H. de la P. Gough, commanding the Fifth Army, and on the following day by the Commander-in-Chief himself, General Sir Douglas Haig.

The battalion's losses had been 2 officers killed and 3 wounded, and 13 other ranks killed, 114 wounded and 26 missing. Amongst those killed were Captain R. F. MacKinnon, M.C., and Regimental Serjeant-Major J. Aylward, who had served many years in the Regular battalions of the Regiment and had been with the 11th Battalion from its birth.

Epilogue

Another old member of the Regiment was killed on the last occasion (and that a small one) in which the Regiment was involved in the Battle of the Somme. On 3rd November the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel T. S. H. Wade) was ordered to attack a portion of the German trenches near Gueudecourt and to establish certain posts. "D" Company with two squads of the battalion bombing platoon were to make a frontal attack, while a platoon of "C" was to move by a flank, the whole supported by artillery and machine guns. Mud prevented "D" from making any headway; it was waist high and some men were stuck in it for a complete day and then had to be dug or pulled out, often leaving their boots, socks and trousers in it. The platoon of "C" tried to advance over the open and were an easy target for the enemy's machine guns and shrapnel barrage. The Germans retaliated by delivering an unsuccessful attack on one of the battalion's bombing posts. But their shelling had killed Regimental Serjeant-Major H. Goulding. The son of a colour-serjeant in the Regiment, he joined the Lancashire Fusiliers in 1892 at the age of fourteen, served in the Sudan and South

10th Bn

African campaigns with the 2nd Battalion, left after serving twenty-one years and rejoined in August, 1914.

15TH AND 16TH BNS.

The only other fact in connection with the tragedy of the Somme which remains to be recorded is that the 15th and 16th Battalions earned the battle honour " Ancre, 1916 " for the Regiment by being in support at Thiepval during an attack from 14th to 17th November.

The curtain fell on the Battle of the Somme on 18th November, 1916.

CHAPTER XI

1916—1917

"ARRAS, 1917," "SCARPE, 1917," "ARLEUX," "MESSINES, 1917"

(Maps 1, 3, 4 and 9)

1st, 2nd, 1st/5th, 2nd/5th, 3rd/5th, 1st/6th, 2nd/6th, 1st/7th, 2nd/7th, 1st/8th, 2nd/8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Battalions

JUST as the Battle of the Somme is limited chronologically to the period between 1st July and 18th November, 1916, so there are geographical boundaries beyond which events are not reckoned as forming part of that struggle. But it must not be supposed that complete stagnation pervaded the whole of the rest of the British front or that many gallant and useful deeds were not performed elsewhere between those dates. Raids were necessary, partly to induce the enemy to think that an attack was impending so that he should not move reserves towards his threatened line in the south, and partly to find out whether any changes had taken place in the German garrisons of particular sectors of the line. The first section of this chapter therefore covers the period of the Battle of the Somme, though the scene is laid elsewhere.

After its heavy losses in the disastrous attack at Thiepval on 1st July, the 16th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Abercrombie, C.M.G.) performed only one tour of duty in the line in the Somme area before it was transferred, with the 15th Battalion, to a quieter sector south-east of Béthune and south of the La Bassée Canal. While in reserve at Cambrin on 30th August, a special patrol consisting of Lieutenant C. W. Smith, Second-Lieutenant C. S. Marriott and two N.C.Os. was sent out from the 16th Battalion to examine the enemy's wire in preparation for a proposed raid. When close to the German line both N.C.Os. were wounded. The two officers dragged them back about forty yards under fire. Marriott then stayed to protect them while Smith went back for help. The N.C.Os. were brought in, but died later. The reconnaissance of the enemy's wire was therefore less thorough than had been intended, with the result that, when Smith led a raid on 7th September, the wire was found to be stronger than was supposed and the gaps cut in it by the artillery were not complete enough to be used. Some time was spent in trying to cut it by hand, but this took so long that Smith decided to withdraw after suffering several casualties. The attempt was repeated on the night of 10th/11th September, this time with success. The preparations were made by Captain T. F.

16TH BN.

Tweed, M.C., who also commanded the operation. The moon was nearly full but the night was cloudy. At 2.30 a.m., after an artillery bombardment of the German trenches which lasted for fifteen seconds and then lifted to form a "box barrage" round the edges of the area of attack, the main raiding party consisting of Lieutenant C. W. Smith, Second-Lieutenants C. S. Marriott and W. E. Foss and 71 other ranks advanced, while Second-Lieutenant W. J. A. Sydes and 18 men attacked some enemy posts known as "Railway Craters" in order to cover the right flank. A Lewis gun guarded the left flank. The main party took with it two Bangalore torpedoes, both of which had to be fired by Smith before a way could be made through the German wire. The trenches were entered and several dug-outs searched. Marriott prevented the alarm being given by shooting a sentry who was on the point of firing a signal rocket. Blocks were placed in communication trenches and the party returned with four prisoners of the 102nd Regiment. Its casualties were seven men slightly wounded by shell splinters. Congratulations on "good and useful work" were received from the First Army Commander, who said in his telegram that the identifications were of great importance not only to the Army but to all the Allied armies fighting on the Western Front. The Military Cross was awarded to Lieutenant C. W. Smith and Second-Lieutenant W. E. Foss and Military Medals to Serjeant J. Wilkinson, Lance-Serjeant E. Holland and Corporal D. Smith.

20TH BN.

The Military Medal and the Divisional Commander's congratulations were earned by Serjeant H. C. Bolton of the 20th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. Vaughan, Manchester Regiment) for a brilliant piece of daylight patrolling near Arras on 20th September. He went out during the afternoon to investigate an old chimney in No Man's Land which had given rise to much suspicion. At a second attempt he succeeded in entering it and found a ladder leading up to a hole made by a shell in the wall about twenty feet from the ground. Iron supports were fastened inside the chimney as if to enable an observer or sniper to sit in comparative comfort while using the hole. There were traces of fresh mud on the rungs of the ladder. The chimney was afterwards suitably dealt with.

1ST BN.

The fine spirit and the close interest in all things concerned with active soldiering which will always be associated with the memory of King Albert of the Belgians were exemplified by a visit with which he honoured the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel M. Magniac, D.S.O.) in the line at Railway Wood, near Ypres, at 0.30 a.m. on 28th September. Accompanied by Prince Alexander of Teck and the Corps Commander, Lieutenant-General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston, His Majesty inspected the battalion's front-line trenches, in which the parapet had to be raised by sandbags at dangerous spots owing to his height. He expressed himself as highly satisfied with the condition of the trenches and the amount of work put into them. The Corps Commander afterwards endorsed this

praise in a letter in which he remarked that "even the Strombos horn was polished."

Two days later, on 30th September, the 1st Battalion was responsible for a successful raid on the enemy lines opposite Railway Wood. At 7 p.m. that evening, a raiding party consisting of Captain J. F. B. Stevenson, Second-Lieutenant R. Downes, Second-Lieutenant F. R. Logan and 37 N.C.Os. and men assembled in the front line. At 7.30 p.m. Logan and a small party carrying a Bangalore torpedo moved out to a selected position in No Man's Land, while flank guards were posted in shell holes on the right and left. Between 8 p.m. and 8.40 p.m. a barrage of fire was gradually built up, first light trench mortars, then Stokes mortars, howitzers and field guns, and finally machine guns. At 8.30 p.m. the raiding party left their trenches and formed up in No Man's Land. Ten minutes later Logan's party moved forward to the German wire, which it found partially destroyed. In another ten minutes, after two missfires, the Bangalore torpedo had made a sufficient gap; and after an intensive bombardment for five minutes, the main party under Stevenson entered the German trench. Downes led some men to the right and met a German post of four men who threw away their rifles and fled, while Logan and his party moved to the left for fifty yards and blocked a communication trench. No further signs of the enemy were seen; but, when the raiders were recalled at 9.20 p.m. by the sounding of the Regimental call on a bugle, they brought back with them three rifles, a quantity of ammunition, bombs and periscopes and five bundles containing greatcoats and kit from which some useful identifications were obtained. The only casualty suffered was one man slightly wounded. Telegrams of congratulation were received from the Army and Corps Commanders; Captain J. F. B. Stevenson was awarded the Military Cross; and Serjeant J. Hughes, Corporal E. Wright, Lance-Corporal W. H. Whittaker and Private T. W. Pollard received the Military Medal. 1ST BN.

In the same week the 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Irvine, C.M.G.) was involved in a night of bombing encounters while in the line at Dainville near Arras. At 10.30 p.m. on 2nd October two bombing patrols were sent out. That from the right ("Z") company was unable to find a way through the enemy's wire, but bombed one of his sap-heads and returned by midnight without loss. The other, from the left ("X") company, got into the German wire where it was bombed, Second-Lieutenant H. F. Ward being hit. At 2.45 a.m. Serjeant Coates returned to the British lines, having partly carried, partly rolled, Ward across No Man's Land, an action for which he was subsequently praised by the Divisional Commander. Four other men came in later, but three N.C.Os. and men were wounded and one missing as the result of this affair. 18TH BN.

The 18th Battalion was less successful as regards praise from the Divisional Commander when he visited part of the front line during the morning of 4th October, for he commented adversely on the number of officers' servants in Serjeant Rushton's 18TH BN.

platoon, "owing to lack of organization by the Company Commander"!

17TH BN. Another light touch to be found in the records of this period is the fact that from 11th to 17th October the 17th Battalion was billeted in a girls' school at Arras. It may perhaps be merely a coincidence that it was billeted in a similar establishment at Béthune in June, 1916.

Let one more insignificant but curious item be recorded before
11TH BN we turn to more serious events. The War Diary of the 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel L. G. Bird, D.S.O.) noted on 14th November that during a relief of the battalion between 9 a.m. and noon near Le Gheer (so well known to the 2nd Battalion in 1914 and early 1915) the Germans opened rapid fire on a flock of ducks which flew over at about 11 a.m.

An Echo of the Battle of the Somme

16TH BN. It was mentioned in the last chapter that the 16th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Abercrombie, C.M.G.) helped to earn the battle honour "Ancre, 1916" by being in support on 18th November during the last attack which is officially included in the Battle of the Somme. As a result of that attack a party of 7 officers and 120 other ranks of 11th Border Regiment and 16th Highland Light Infantry which had gained a footing in Frankfort Trench, about a mile north-east of Beaumont Hamel, had been cut off by enemy who still occupied an intermediate line known as Munich Trench. On the night of 20th/21st November, a company serjeant-major and a private of the 11th Border Regiment succeeded in making their way back with the report that the party was still holding out but was short of food and water and in a critical position. Patrols were pushed forward on the following night with a view to gaining touch with the beleaguered troops, but as they could not find a gap in the wire protecting Munich Trench, which was occupied by the enemy, they returned to their lines. On 22nd November two more men escaped from Frankfort Trench and confirmed the previous report. It was therefore decided that an organized attempt at rescue should be made by three companies of the 16th Lancashire Fusiliers and one company of 2nd Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, each of 80 N.C.Os. and men, the whole under the command of Captain C. W. Merry-weather, 16th Lancashire Fusiliers. The plan was that Munich Trench should be seized and the approaches to it blocked by the bulk of the attacking body while a comparatively small party dashed on to Frankfort Trench and rescued the British troops in it. The attack was launched at 3.30 p.m. on 23rd November. A skilfully placed and intense barrage enabled most of Munich Trench to be occupied without much difficulty. But unfortunately some of the attacking waves bunched, with the result that it was not seized throughout its length; and the Germans, who were holding it in considerable strength, were able to emerge from their dug-outs and bomb the flanks of the British groups. Hand-to-hand fighting

ensued, during which some prisoners who had been taken managed to escape, though about twenty Germans (including an officer) were bayoneted. In the meanwhile, one wave, under Lieutenant G. N. Higginson, had pushed on towards Frankfort Trench. Higginson and all his N.C.Os. were shot as his party lay in the open waiting for the barrage to lift beyond their objective. Second-Lieutenant H. B. Rylands was sent forward to take over the command of this forlorn hope; but he too fell when he had gone a short distance. When the barrage lifted there appeared to be only some ten men left, and they were unable to get forward. Nothing was seen of the beleaguered party in Frankfort Trench and only a few men of Higginson's wave succeeded in making their way back to Munich Trench. Merryweather himself was seen to fall as he stood on the edge of that trench directing operations. In spite of the efforts of Lieutenant D. Robertson, ably helped by Second-Lieutenants W. N. Watts and C. S. Jones and by Serjeant J. Holland and Lance-Corporal G. R. Hughes, to hold off the enemy in Munich Trench by means of blocks, it was by now evident that the attempt had failed. The survivors withdrew to the British line at about 4.15 p.m., losing heavily from machine-gun fire on both flanks as they retired. Lance-Corporal Hughes carried back with him a wounded officer of the 2nd Inniskilling Fusiliers. The battalion's casualties in this operation were 2 officers and 10 other ranks killed, 95 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 56 other ranks missing. Lieutenant D. Robertson received the Military Cross at a later date, as did the unit's chaplain, the Rev. W. H. Fawkes, who set a splendid example of bravery, devotion and untiring work and brought in many wounded men, including at least three from the wire of Munich Trench. Military Medals were awarded to Serjeant J. Holland and Lance-Corporal G. R. Hughes; and Serjeant J. Timperley was subsequently mentioned in despatches.

A Winter of Routine and Reorganization

Although minor operations designed to exploit the territorial gains of the Battle of the Somme continued at intervals through the winter until March, 1917, the Regiment was directly concerned with only one of them and with one indirectly. Weather and fatigue reduced both sides over the greater part of the front to that state of comparative inactivity, marked by cold, wet and every kind of discomfort and broken by many bombardments and occasional raids, which is known as trench warfare.

17th Bn. One such raid caught the 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Mills) at a disadvantage on 26th November, 1916, near Arras. The day before, a heavy bombardment by German trench mortars had so damaged the trenches at the junction of the sectors held by that battalion and by the unit on its right, which belonged to another brigade, that several bays of the front line had to be evacuated. It was understood that this brigade would fill the gap, but Brigadier-General J. W. Sandilands ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Mills to take

special precautions; and in consequence "X" Company, from the left of the battalion line, relieved "W" Company on the right. The trenches again suffered severely from enemy shelling and several junior commanders and sentries were so badly shaken by it as to be unfit for duty. A patrol sent out between 10 p.m. and midnight found all quiet and an officer who visited the forward posts between 1 and 1.30 a.m. reported that all was well. In the meanwhile, on the right of the battalion sector, all posts had been temporarily withdrawn from the front line because of an intended discharge of gas which, having been originally ordered for 11.45 p.m. and cancelled at 11.35 p.m., was finally ordered at 12.35 a.m. to take place at 2.35 a.m. and again at 4.5 a.m. The officer on duty in this sector, having given orders for a patrol to go out at 2 a.m., went back to his company headquarters, where he found that the officer who was to take the next watch was uncertain of his way. He offered to guide him and both set off towards the front line. Owing to the blocks which had been established in the damaged trenches they had to make a considerable detour. As they did so, they were caught at about 2.20 a.m. by a heavy barrage put down by the German trench mortars and lost their bearings, with the result that it was an hour before they found their way back to their headquarters. During the barrage, which lasted until 3 a.m., the enemy raided the right company's lines. What actually happened is not clear, but it appears that the cumulative effect of the various bombardments and movements of the previous twenty-four hours had been such as to deprive the posts nearest to the attack of all power of resistance. The first news of the raid reached Serjeant Rhodes, who was commanding the reserve platoon in the support line, at 2.30 a.m. As he had just returned from a block which was reported to have been attacked, he found the report difficult to believe, but promptly turned out his platoon, gave out bombs and, leading the way with four men, went up to the front line. When he got there, the enemy had left. Parties from other companies were also converging on the threatened spot and the situation was soon restored, though not before 2 men had been killed, 6 wounded and 25 taken prisoner.

11TH BN. A few days later a patrol of 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel L. G. Bird, D.S.O.) was saved from disaster at Le Gheer, near Ploegsteert, by its coolness. Led by Second-Lieutenants F. Bowmer and T. Rufus, a party of twenty-five N.C.Os. and men went out at 10.20 p.m. on 3rd December with the object of catching any enemy patrols which might be out. It had not been out long before it was discovered by the Germans, who opened heavy rifle and machine-gun fire on it from their trenches. Private Rose was hit when close to the enemy wire, but Private R. Leach carried him back to the trench under heavy fire, going out a second time to bring in another wounded man, while the rest of the patrol withdrew without further casualties, thanks to its steadiness. Leach was awarded the Military Medal for his gallantry.

As the war progressed and imposed an ever-increasing strain on

the manpower of the country, it became more and more difficult to preserve the special characteristics of individual battalions. Officers and men who had been invalided home with wounds or sickness had to be used as a pool for the reinforcement of any battalion which was short in strength and they frequently found themselves posted to units other than their own. Pre-war Regulars were sent to Territorial and New Army battalions and *vice versa*. For instance, on 10th December, 1916, the 19th Battalion, which spent the winter in working on trenches near Arras and near Laventie, received a valued draft of seventy men, most of whom originally belonged to the 1st Battalion and had served in Gallipoli. Other battalions were not so fortunate; and efforts to preserve the "bantam" character of the 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions (in whose trench relief orders in the early days had recurred the phrase "Two sandbags per man for filling and placing on the fire-step will be provided: parapets are not to be lowered") had resulted in sending to them a great number of unfit men. The climax was reached when the Army Commander one day met a very short-sighted man and a man so deaf as to be a positive danger in the front line where the enemy's approach by night was as likely to be heard as seen. Thorough medical inspections were carried out during the winter months: the 17th Battalion lost about 170 N.C.Os. and men, the 18th about 190 and the 20th about 135; and orders were received that "the bantam standard must be disregarded for good and all" when the consequent incorporation of new drafts took place.

19TH BN.

17TH, 18TH AND 20TH BNS.

Once again during this winter the 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel L. G. Bird, D.S.O.) showed the Germans that they were not to be trifled with. Early on the morning of 22nd January, 1917, the battalion took over a sector of trenches at St. Yves, near Ploegsteert. At 1.45 p.m. the enemy opened a heavy bombardment with medium and field guns, heavy, medium and light trench mortars, and rifle grenades, continuing throughout the afternoon. A great deal of damage was done to the front line and several communication trenches, numerous casualties were caused and several Lewis guns were buried. The bombardment increased in intensity at about 5 p.m. and shortly afterwards three parties of Germans advanced. The first, about thirty strong, was seen in No Man's Land opposite the extreme left of the battalion's line, but was quickly dispersed by Lewis-gun and rifle fire. The second, also about thirty strong, split up into small groups and, after making an attempt to advance through a ruin (known as Broken Tree House) which was stopped by a Lewis-gun team, succeeded in making a detour and entering the British lines at a point which had been very badly damaged by trench-mortar bombs. The Lewis gun was thereupon moved to a shell hole behind the trench from which effective fire was brought to bear on the enemy in the trench. The third German party, slightly stronger than the other two, also found a severely damaged place at which to enter the front line and began to work along it in both directions. Second-Lieutenant

11TH BN.

J. A. Nathan, who was in command of "D" Company in the centre of the battalion's line, thus had an enemy party on each flank. But he at once collected all the men near him and, although wounded in the foot by a bomb, continued to hold off the Germans until reinforcements arrived. In the meanwhile, Second-Lieutenant T. Rufus, who commanded "C" Company on the right, hearing that the enemy had gained a footing in the trenches to his left, put up the "S O S" signal, formed a bombing party and led it towards the scene of action. Captain R. K. Beswick, M.C., of "B" Company, in reserve, had simultaneously first sent up a platoon and a Lewis-gun team and then brought forward the remainder of his command. These parties converged on the Germans at about 5.25 p.m., but the raiders did not stay for close fighting and withdrew. Posts were re-established and the repair of the trenches was begun. During the day the battalion lost 1 officer and 18 other ranks killed and 2 officers and 29 other ranks wounded. They lost neither prisoners nor booty, but the enemy left behind him three rifles, two caps and a number of stick grenades.

2ND/5TH BN.

Earlier in the month, Second-Lieutenant G. Hartley, of the 2nd/5th Battalion, had earned the Military Cross by a fine piece of work. On 8th January he took out a patrol at Railway Wood, near Ypres, to locate an enemy machine gun. Two of his men were wounded and he himself received a nasty injury to his head. He helped one of the wounded men back and then, finding that the other had lost his way, had his own head quickly bandaged before going in search of him. He stayed out in No Man's Land for an hour and a half in a vain but gallant effort to find the missing man.

16TH BN.

It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter that the last mutterings of the thunder of the Battle of the Somme did not die away until March of 1917. On 10th February the 16th Battalion spent an uncomfortable day holding the front line under heavy shell fire while two battalions of another brigade delivered an attack on Ten Tree Alley, Beaumont Hamel, with the object of improving still further the positions gained in that struggle. And on 28th

1ST BN.

February the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel M. Magniac, D.S.O.) took part in an attack at Sailly-Saillisel, farther to the south, in order to maintain pressure on an enemy who was showing signs of weakening his hold over his most advanced positions and to secure observation over the village of Rocquigny. "C" Company (Captain D. H. Smith), with elements of "B" (Captain T. Slingsby) and "D" (Second-Lieutenant I. Gorfunkle) Companies, were detailed to form a flank to protect the left of the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers and 2nd Royal Fusiliers, who were delivering the main assault. The barrage fell at 5.25 a.m. The Dublins and the Royal Fusiliers gained their objectives. Smith's force was at first successful; but when their supply of bombs was exhausted they had to fall back a short distance to an intermediate position which they consolidated with the help of a reinforcement of bombs, and of the courageous example of Corporal W. Brain, for which he received the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Second-Lieutenant A. H. Lamb did good work which earned him the Military Cross : when Smith was wounded, he took command of the company, organized the defence and drove back several strong German thrusts before being finally forced to withdraw, when Slingsby took over the company. Small though the operation was, the losses of the battalion in officers that day were heavy : Second-Lieutenant J. F. Dodd was killed by a shell and Second-Lieutenant E. Corkhill by a sniper ; Captain D. H. Smith and Second-Lieutenant Cook were wounded ; and Captain T. Slingsby cut his foot in some German wire and had to retire to hospital for a fortnight.

More Battalions arrive in France

The months of February and March, 1917, saw the concentration in France of all the Territorial battalions of the Regiment. The 66th (East Lancashire) Division came from Colchester in the last few days of February, bringing in it the 197th Infantry Brigade, which consisted of the 3rd/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel A. S. Bates, D.S.O., London Rifle Brigade), 2nd/6th (Lieutenant-Colonel A. Berry, 7th Battalion), 2nd/7th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel S. H. Hingley, Middlesex Regiment) and 2nd/8th (Lieutenant-Colonel H. Gordon Roberts, 4th South Lancashire Regiment) Battalions. The 3rd/5th had taken the place of the 2nd/5th when the latter went to France with the 154th Infantry Brigade of the 51st (Highland) Division in May, 1915. The 197th Brigade made its first appearance in the line at Givenchy, near Béthune, the 3rd/5th and 2nd/7th taking over sectors on 14th March. The 2nd/7th was not long left undisturbed. On 17th March the Germans, perhaps led by unaccustomed happenings to believe that they had some new neighbours, put down a heavy barrage of shrapnel and trench mortars on the front line at 1.15 a.m. and then attempted a raid. Several Germans were seen approaching the battalion's line, dragging behind them what looked like two machine guns on trolleys. But rapid rifle and machine-gun fire was opened and the artillery answered the "S O S" call, with the result that the attack was driven off. The XI Corps Commander, Lieutenant-General Sir R. Haking, K.C.B., was very pleased with the good start made by the new division and sent a cordial message of appreciation. Private A. Prestwood was awarded the Military Medal for his coolness on this occasion, the first honour to be won by the 66th Division.

3rd/5th, 2nd/6th, 2nd/7th and 2nd/8th Bns.

2nd/7th Bn.

The 2nd/6th and 2nd/8th began their first tour of duty in the line on 19th March, and it did not lack excitement ; for on the last day, 23rd, the Germans blew a mine opposite a sap held by the 2nd/8th, causing four casualties but little damage to the trenches.

2nd/8th Bn

When the other half-brigade went back into the same sector at Givenchy, it was the turn of the 3rd/5th Battalion to be disturbed. At 4.50 a.m. on 24th March about a dozen Germans approached a post in Canadian Orchard and threw bombs. This attack was immediately answered with rifle fire and with bombs, though unfortunately the nearest Lewis gun jammed. Nevertheless a

3rd/5th Bn.

German was killed on the wire and another was taken prisoner; the latter was very badly wounded and died at the dressing station. On 31st March a heavy German trench-mortar bomb of the kind known as a "rum jar" dropped on the front-line ammunition store of "D" Company of the 3rd 5th and set it on fire. Captain C. W. Laughlin, Second-Lieutenant S. E. Reid, Company Serjeant-Major S. Pendlebury, Serjeant E. Morris, Lance-Corporal T. Higgs, Private J. Williams and Private J. W. Pickup were warmly congratulated by the Divisional Commander (Major-General The Hon. Sir H. A. Lawrence, K.C.B.) on their coolness in putting out the fire with wet sandbags.

1ST 5TH, 1ST 6TH, 1ST 7TH AND 1ST 8TH BNS.

The tale of the Territorial battalions in France was finally completed by the transfer from Egypt of the original first-line units, the 1st/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel F. A. Woodcock, T.D.), 1st/6th (Lieutenant-Colonel R. L. Lees, D.S.O.) and 1st/7th (Lieutenant-Colonel H. C. Woodcock) and 1st 8th (Lieutenant-Colonel O. St. L. Davies) Battalions. After disembarking at Marseilles, the division went by train to near Amiens and moved forward to the new line north-east of Péronne. In the case of the second-line division it was the 2nd/7th Battalion which led the way into the front line: by a curious coincidence, the 1st 7th was the first battalion of the first-line division to hold a sector of trenches in France, its tour beginning on 8th April at Epéhy.

1ST/7TH BN

THE ADVANCE TO THE HINDENBURG LINE

15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions

Early in 1917 it was agreed between the British and French Governments and Commanders-in-Chief that the British Army should take over more of the front. In consequence, at various dates from 20th February onwards, the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions found themselves in strange trenches, between the Amiens–Bapaume road and the Amiens–Noyon road, which had previously been held by the French. The 15th and 16th Battalions took their turn in trenches at Bouchoir and Rouvroy-en-Santerre, near Roye, while the 17th, 18th and 20th held sectors farther north at Chilly and Lihons, near Chaulnes.

15TH, 16TH, 17TH, 18TH AND 20TH BNS.

But they were not to remain there long. One of the effects of the Battle of the Somme had been to leave the German forces south of Arras in several dangerous salients. Ludendorff, who, with Hindenburg as his titular chief, had succeeded Falkenhayn in the supreme direction of the German Army in the summer of 1916, decided to evacuate them and to shorten his line. A very formidable set of defences, known to the British as the Hindenburg Line, was prepared to the south-east of Arras and completed early in 1917. The area to be given up was systematically laid waste so that the Allies should derive as little benefit and comfort from it as possible when they advanced into it. Ingenious booby traps were left in

dug-outs, ruins and other likely places. Appreciating that a British attack, designed to exploit the results of the Battle of the Somme, was to be expected early in the spring, Ludendorff decided to anticipate it by withdrawing to the Hindenburg Line in March.

On 14th March patrols found the enemy lines near Sailly-Saillisel empty; next day information was received which indicated that the Germans were about to retire south of the Somme also. Orders were therefore given for a general advance on the whole British front south of Arras to be begun on 17th March. On that day the 16th Battalion advanced two thousand yards and took up positions on the Fouquescourt–Damery road; and the 17th pushed forward to Hallu, sending patrols to Punchy. From then on the four battalions, sometimes as the leading troops and sometimes in support or reserve, moved steadily on: the 15th and 16th through Réthonvillers and Nesle, across the Somme and its canal at Offoy, to the neighbourhood of Savy, some five miles west-south-west of St. Quentin; while the 17th, 18th and 20th advanced to Curchy, spent some days on labour duties connected with clearing up the devastated area, and then moved forward by stages to near Fresnoy-le-Petit, about four miles north-west of St. Quentin. In both cases the total distance advanced had been about sixteen miles, through country deprived of all shelter and in severe weather.

16TH BN.

17TH BN.

15TH AND 16TH BNS.

17TH, 18TH AND 20TH BNS.

The Attack at Savy Wood

15th and 16th Battalions

Whatever the Allied commanders may have thought to the contrary, the German retirement was voluntary and was carried out at the enemy's pace. If he found himself being hustled, he fought a rearguard action to gain time for the main Hindenburg Line to be firmly occupied according to plan. For this reason he made a stand on 31st March on the high ground which lies about four miles west of St. Quentin between Savy and Holnon. An attack on his position was ordered for 1st April with the object of preventing him from "recovering his morale, bringing his guns into action and reorganizing his defences." The 96th Infantry Brigade, which included the 15th and 16th Battalions, was to take part in it.

15TH AND 16TH BNS.

The only covered position in which the brigade could assemble was in a valley near the chateau of the village of Pommery, which lay about five thousand yards from the objective—Savy Wood and a wood close to it. From this valley the advance had to be made in full view of the enemy throughout the whole distance. The 15th (Lieutenant-Colonel H. G. Harrison) and 16th (Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Abercrombie, C.M.G.) Battalions marched to the assembly position at about 7.30 a.m. on 1st April. The 15th was leading, with the 16th behind, the two other battalions of the brigade being on the right. The 15th was to take the south-west corner of Savy Wood and then swing three companies forward to cover the north-east side of it as far

as a halt on the St. Quentin–Péronne railway. The 16th was to send two companies through the 15th to capture the north end of Savy Wood and three platoons with the 15th as moppers-up, the remainder of the battalion being in reserve. At the end of the operation, the two units were to establish a long line of strong points covering the north-east and north of Savy Wood.

The assaulting troops moved from the assembly position at about 1 p.m. On coming over the crest of the hill which protected the valley, they immediately came under heavy shrapnel fire which caused some casualties. The weather was shocking, snow, hail, rain and a gale of wind continuing throughout the day. Through it, they marched down the slopes leading to the village of Savy. As they debouched from Savy they deployed with great steadiness, although both flanks were exposed to machine-gun fire. They therefore shook out into extended order, only to come under further machine-gun fire from the front. But they pushed on under cover of the barrage, which lifted at 3.30 p.m. and enabled them to reach Savy Wood. The wood was found to be unoccupied but elaborately prepared as an obstacle by fallen trees and brushwood. Both battalions proceeded to carry out their tasks, in the main with success, though not without incident or difficulty, the latter caused largely by the thickness of the wood and its obstructions. The 16th Battalion early met with opposition as its men worked along the north-west edge of the wood, for about sixty of the enemy appeared on some high ground on the left and opened fire, only to be driven off with Lewis-gun fire. Many acts of gallantry were performed during this stage. In the 15th Battalion, Lieutenant A. W. Cantwell, though normally in command of the headquarter bombers, took charge of a company when its commander was wounded and led it to its objective. Corporal F. W. Strath showed good initiative and great bravery in assuming command of his platoon when its leader became a casualty and similarly taking it forward to its goal, where he set to work on the task of consolidation. Private E. Royles took charge of a Lewis-gun section after its corporal had been wounded; and, though the rest of the team were soon after knocked out and he was under heavy machine-gun fire, he managed to get the gun into action. Later he went back for some ammunition and continued to fire his gun in spite of the fact that he was by then very exhausted. Somewhat similar was the action of Private L. Brabant who, when his section commander was killed, inspired the section by his example and coolness and led them forward to their position. But more important was the action of Serjeant J. P. G. Smith in promptly taking command of his company when its commander was wounded and bringing them up to the objective, whereupon he busied himself with supervising the work of consolidation until reinforcements arrived. Nor was the 16th Battalion lacking in gallant individuals. When his platoon commander, a serjeant, was wounded, Corporal A. Heap promptly assumed command and set a fine example of coolness and courage. Lance-Corporal G. Mather had the distinction

of being the first man to reach the north point of the wood, where he opened fire with a Lewis gun and so covered the advance of the rest of his company.

By about 4 p.m. the greater part of the objective of the two battalions had been captured. But the Germans had posted some machine guns near the halt which has been mentioned; and these commanded much of the ground lying to the east of the wood and caused many casualties. The 15th Battalion reported at 7 p.m. that they were still unable to reach the halt, and it was therefore heavily shelled till 8.30 p.m., when the battalion was able to capture it and two machine guns. Cantwell again distinguished himself and took a prominent part in helping to clear the enemy out. Useful work was also performed by Lance-Corporal H. Rogerson, who, in spite of the heavy fire, succeeded in carrying out his orders to keep touch with the battalion on the right, setting a fine example of devotion to duty

As soon as the 15th had established itself at the halt it was ordered to push on at once and seize a line running eastward from the north point of Savy Wood and hold it by means of a series of strong points. This proved to be impossible, but by 9.30 p.m. a continuous line of posts, in touch with units on the right and left, had been set out along the north-east and northern faces of the wood by the 15th and 16th Battalions, who were justly pleased with the results of their first experience of anything approaching open warfare. The 15th had lost 7 officers and 100 other ranks, the 16th 5 officers and 119 other ranks. In the former, Lieutenant A. W. Cantwell received the Military Cross, Corporal F. W. Strath the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and Serjeant J. P. G. Smith, Lance-Corporal H. Rogerson, Private L. Brabant the Military Medal. In the 16th, Corporal A. Heap, Lance-Corporal J. Welch and Lance-Corporal G. Mather were awarded the Military Medal.

The Operations near Gricourt

17th, 18th and 20th Battalions

Although the events which will now be described fall chronologically after the beginning of the Battle of Arras, it will be convenient to record them here since they form an integral part of the German retirement to the Hindenburg Line and are closely linked with the operations at Savy Wood.

The 14th April, 1917, found the 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Mills) in the line at Fresnoy-le-Petit, about 4,500 yards north of Savy Wood, with "X" (Second-Lieutenant W. B. K. Glass) and "Z" (Lieutenant R. S. Heape) Companies forward and "W" and "Y" in reserve and support. The 32nd Division (to which the 15th and 16th Battalions belonged) was to continue its attacks on the right on that day, while the 35th Division (which included the 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions) was to take Gricourt, not by a direct assault but by squeezing it out 17TH BN

with converging attacks. The original plan provided for the capture of the high ground north and south of the village by the 18th and 20th Battalions, but it was never carried out owing to rapid changes in the situation of which advantage was skilfully taken by commanders on the spot.

At 6 a.m. on 14th April two officers' patrols of the 17th Battalion were sent forward to reconnoitre Gricourt and occupy it if it proved to be only lightly held. A German post in Fresnoy cemetery, which lies about half-way between Fresnoy and Gricourt, opposed the left patrol, and sharp fighting took place in which four Germans were killed. The right patrol, from "X" Company, after establishing a post, reached the outskirts of Gricourt, which it found strongly held, and had to fall back, leaving one man in the enemy's hands, though he was released during the advance later in the day. The Germans in the cemetery tried to cut off this patrol and its fate was for some time in doubt; but at about 11.30 a.m. Second-Lieutenant G. MacKereth crawled about a hundred yards across the open and succeeded in reaching the patrol, reorganizing it and getting it safely back. At about 12 noon a message was received from brigade headquarters that the enemy had been seen massing south-west of Gricourt and that a counter-attack against the junction of the 32nd and 35th Divisions was to be expected. Major F. J. F. Crook, D.S.O., was sent to the front line with orders to hold it at all costs and to cover the flank of the 32nd Division, using two companies of the 23rd Manchester Regiment in addition to the companies of the 17th Lancashire Fusiliers if necessary. By 1.5 p.m. the attack of the 32nd Division had begun to develop and the Germans made several attempts to reinforce their threatened front; but each time they were frustrated by two Lewis guns, posted at the south-east corner of Fresnoy, which fired at a range of six hundred yards. A quarter of an hour later the Germans, caught by the 32nd Division's barrage, tried to retire on to Gricourt. Again the two Lewis guns opened fire and stopped them, three men being killed and the rest surrendering to the 32nd Division.

At 2.30 p.m. a large patrol, supported by two Stokes mortars, was pushed out towards the strong point in the cemetery, the garrison of which, after a hurricane bombardment from the mortars and finding its retreat threatened by the post established in the morning, surrendered to "Z" Company to the number of a warrant officer and fifty men. "Z" Company was then ordered to establish a position east of the cemetery, which it did by 2.45 p.m. Major Crook thereupon on his own initiative instructed "X" and "Z" Companies to push on towards Gricourt at 3.30 p.m., "W" and "Y" replacing them in the line at Fresnoy. A footing was soon obtained on the outskirts of Gricourt and the flanks were manœuvred with a view to enveloping the village. The left soon came under heavy enfilade fire from the direction of Pontruet and could advance no farther than the Gricourt–Pontruet road, where it established itself about seventy yards north of the former. In the meanwhile the right

flank had got far round the village, whereupon many Germans retired in a north-easterly direction, leaving sniping posts behind them to delay any further attempt to advance. Patrols from "Z" Company under Second-Lieutenants J. A. Wallis and W. M. Holden and from "X" Company under Second-Lieutenant W. L. Caldwell were then pushed through the village and, after some fighting, killed or captured the remaining enemy. Holden particularly distinguished himself; he led his men most gallantly, shot two Germans with his revolver and succeeded in capturing fifty prisoners.

During this stage of the action, German artillery and enfilade machine-gun fire had become more and more severe. The former was directed partly by an aeroplane which flew low over Gricourt until "Y" Company turned on to it the concentrated fire of their Lewis guns, whereupon it was seen to "nose-dive" about 2,000 yards east of Gricourt. The bringing down of an aeroplane by Lewis-gun fire was an event so rare as to cause a considerable stir in high quarters. "Y" Company's guns also did useful work in firing on parties of Germans who were reinforcing their positions at Les Trois Sauvages, about six hundred yards east of Gricourt.

At 7.45 p.m. the forward troops were ordered to consolidate. But as Gricourt lay in a hollow, the line to be dug was to run along the western side of the village, with only posts in and to the east of it. At 12.45 a.m. that night the battalion was relieved by the 18th Battalion, having captured during the day well over fifty prisoners, four grenade throwers and a number of boxes of ammunition, while its casualties had been 13 men killed and 1 officer and 34 other ranks wounded. Second-Lieutenants G. MacKereth and W. M. Holden were awarded the Military Cross and Privates G. Booth, J. Walker and A. W. Chisnall the Military Medal. The Corps Commander congratulated all concerned on their "phenomenal" success, as indeed it may be regarded since it was achieved with no preliminary scheme or orders and with no artillery preparation or support and under conditions approximating, as in the case of the 15th and 16th Battalions at Savy Wood, to those of open warfare.

Half a mile east of Gricourt, on a ridge and on a by-road leading from St. Quentin to Pontruet, lay the farm of Les Trois Sauvages. It was to take advantage of the confusion caused to the enemy on 14th April that the 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Irvine, C.M.G.) relieved the 17th Battalion at the change of day, with orders to seize this ridge. An artillery bombardment was opened on the trenches near the farm at 4.15 a.m. on 15th April and, under cover of it, "W" and "Z" Companies of the 18th, under Captain G. A. Duncan, which had formed up in the road east of Gricourt, advanced to the attack. The farm was found to be occupied by about twenty Germans, all of whom were killed or captured by "Z" Company, Serjeants Francis and Owen being the commanders of the first platoons to enter it. Duncan was very energetic, exposing himself freely and fearlessly as he controlled the advance which was then continued with the intention that both companies

18TH BN

should dig in on the ridge about two hundred yards beyond the farm. "Z" Company halted at this point and began to consolidate. But "W," seeing some Germans retreating, pursued them right across the main St. Quentin–Le Catelet road, about eight hundred yards beyond the farm. There they stormed a trench and engaged in hand-to-hand fighting with the enemy, of whom they killed or wounded more than a hundred, using the bayonet freely and bombing dug-outs. Second-Lieutenant W. Dobinson caused many casualties with his own hand and himself destroyed a German machine gun. Unfortunately, the company came under machine-gun fire from both flanks and suffered some loss. At 5.30 a.m. they were ordered to withdraw and to consolidate in line with "Z" Company. The retirement was skilfully carried out by alternate half-platoons, under cover of a Lewis gun sent out to the right flank under Lance-Corporal E. Altham (who gallantly fulfilled his task but was unfortunately killed with all his team as they in turn withdrew), and also the guns of "Z" Company as soon as the troops had crossed back over the main road. A party of the enemy tried to cut off "W"'s retreat by an attack from the south ; the attempt was frustrated, but the retirement was delayed in consequence of it. Daylight came quickly before "W" had finished its movement and it received more machine-gun and rifle fire. Duncan supervised the consolidation of both companies, at times walking along the line fully exposed and cheering up the men.

At 6.5 a.m. "X" Company was ordered forward to support the advanced position. Capturing two German trench mortars on the way it established itself to the north of Les Trois Sauvages farm. The machine-gun fire to which the new line was subjected in the early part of the day was eventually silenced by artillery and machine-guns ; but as the position was overlooked from ridges to the east and south-east, it was deemed best to withdraw "W," "X" and "Z" Companies at dusk, and they accordingly dug themselves in east of Gricourt, leaving the farm unoccupied. The day's booty included 17 prisoners and the two mortars which have been mentioned. The casualties were 30 men killed, 3 officers and 50 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 16 other ranks missing. The Military Cross was awarded to Captain G. A. Duncan and Second-Lieutenant W. Dobinson, and Military Medals to Serjeant F. Homer, Lance-Corporal J. Algie and Private C. Le Maitre.

20TH BN. In the meanwhile, about 2,000 yards to the north of Les Trois Sauvages, the 20th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. Vaughan) was attacking some trenches on the Pontruet ridge with the sunken road leading from that village to Les Trois Sauvages as its final objective. The assault was launched at 4 a.m., the difference of half an hour between the attacks of the two battalions being due to the brigade commander's desire to distract the enemy's attention away from Pontruet where, he considered, there was the best chance of securing a decisive success. "Y" Company was in front on the right with "X" behind it, while "W" Company supported by

"Z" was on the left. The whole battalion was organized in four lines, of which the first two were to go right through to the final objective and the remainder to clear up the first objective. The frontage was about five hundred yards. The 17th Royal Scots pushed forward a Lewis gun to protect the left flank of the advance, but unfortunately the commander and most of the team were wounded at an early stage. "Z" Company echeloned several parties and a Lewis gun to protect this flank. By 4.25 a.m. the attacking troops had reached their objectives and made good use of the remaining minutes of darkness to establish themselves firmly and to join hands with the 18th Battalion on their right. Patrols were pushed forward on both flanks and posts were set on the high ground to the front. The left patrol came under heavy fire from the direction of Pontruet and nearly all its men were hit.

Useful work was done by Captain B. C. H. Keenlyside, Captain H. C. Pemberton, Second-Lieutenants T. W. Hollows, E. J. Gibbons, E. A. Clegg and R. Irvine, and by Privates E. Jones (who was awarded the Military Medal) and W. Wright. It was remarked at the time that a number of men of the 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions were under fire for the first time on the 14th and 15th April and that their keenness to close with the enemy was most satisfactory. 17TH, 18TH AND 20TH BNS

The 20th Battalion suffered considerable casualties all through 15th April owing to sniping and machine-gun fire from the neighbourhood of Pontruet. Two raiding parties were therefore sent out by it early on 16th, working in conjunction with similar parties of 23rd Manchester Regiment. One party went to a new trench which the Germans had dug for about half a mile south-east of Pontruet, but they found it empty and incomplete; nor did a second visit late the same day produce any result, in spite of an hour's lying in wait. The other party, however, bombed Germans out of their line between the left of the battalion's position and the village of Pontruet. 20TH BN.

After a few days' rest, the three battalions were again in the front line. On 24th April the 17th Battalion raided Pontruet under cover of artillery fire and found that the enemy had evacuated it. On the 28th the 18th established posts in the village. Between 25th April and 5th May, all battalions sent out frequent patrols to keep touch with the enemy, to make progress where possible and to report on the state of the bridges over the streams. One such patrol, from the 20th, went out on 30th April under Second-Lieutenant E. J. Gibbons to reconnoitre a copse about two thousand yards north of Berthaucourt (a hamlet of Pontruet) which was later called Somerville Wood. It proved to be a hornet's nest. As soon as the patrol entered it, they were fired on at close range by strong enemy parties. Gibbons drew his revolver to fire but was hit, as was his N.C.O. after firing five rounds. One man rushed at the enemy and was killed. The other two escaped. Another patrol later brought in the N.C.O. and the dead man, but could not find the officer, who was, it transpired, killed. The patrol was avenged on 5th May by 23rd

17TH BN. 18TH BN. 20TH BN.

Manchester Regiment, who captured the wood and handed it over
17TH BN. to the 17th Battalion. The same night the Germans counter-attacked the posts which the latter had established and after hand-to-hand fighting managed to drive them back, in spite of stout resistance, especially by the post commanded by Corporal J. Morrey, who bayoneted four Germans but fell to a rifle shot. At midnight, however, a counter-attack, led with determination and skill by Lieutenant R. S. Heape, regained all that had been lost, nine of the enemy being killed, three taken prisoner and many wounded. Heape was awarded the Military Cross and Lance-Serjeant G. H. Stringer and Lance-Corporal A. Williamson the Military Medal.

Shortly after, the three battalions went to a more stabilized part of the new line a little farther north. And now it is necessary to go back slightly in point of time and see what had been happening near Arras in the meanwhile.

The Battle of Arras

"ARRAS, 1917." "SCARPE, 1917." "ARLEUX"

1st, 2nd and 10th Battalions

The first major offensive delivered by the British Army in 1917, known as the Battle of Arras, opened on 9th April of that year and formed part of a general scheme of attacks on all fronts, timed to help each other by depriving the enemy of the power of weakening any one of his fronts in order to reinforce another. General Sir Douglas Haig's first efforts were to be directed against the German troops occupying the salient between the River Scarpe and the River Ancre into which they had been pressed as a result of the Battle of the Somme. His intention was to attack both shoulders of this salient at the same time—the Third Army thrusting from the north-west about Arras, the Fifth Army from the south-west on the Ancre. The attacks were to converge with a view to "pinching off" the whole salient, and the northern operation was to include the capture of Vimy Ridge. The German retirement to the Hindenburg Line, part of which has just been described, upset this plan so far as "pinching off" the Arras salient was concerned. But it appeared likely that a big attack in this sector would hold a large number of enemy troops while preparations were being completed for the main attack of the year in Flanders, which took place eventually on 31st July, 1917, under the title of the Third Battle of Ypres. On 9th April, 1917, therefore, seventeen British and Dominion divisions took part in an attack on the German line which, near Arras, ran within a few hundred yards of the eastern outskirts of that town.
2ND BN. One of those divisions was the 4th, in which was the 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Griffin, D.S.O.) and which was to pass through the 9th Division for the second phase of the operation.

Since the Battle of the Somme, the battalion had spent the winter in the Somme district until 3rd March, 1917, when it went to the

Two N.C.Os. of 11th Lancashire Fusiliers at Ploegsteert, January, 1917.

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back area for rest and training. On 7th April it moved to "Y" Hutments at Etrun, three miles north-west of Arras in the valley of the River Scarpe. The next day was spent in the final preparations for the attack: grenades and stores were issued and the plan explained. All ranks felt the greatest confidence and cheerfulness. At night, while the officers were at dinner, the Commanding Officer's privileged orderly, Private John Carr, came in and wished them all the best of luck, adding that he had a good bandage ready for the Colonel in case he happened to "stop one" next day! Reveille on 9th April was at 3.30 a.m. An hour later the battalion moved to its assembly area on the north-western outskirts of Arras, where it arrived at 7.25 a.m., to find itself in the midst of a number of heavy batteries, while the hill in front was thick with medium and field batteries. The shells from the howitzers could be seen going up into the sky; and the men were further encouraged by the sight of a great number of Germans passing into a prisoners' cage which was also near by. They even forgot the rain that came down in a steady drizzle during the long wait, which was, however, relieved by the issue of a hot meal at 9.30 a.m. At last, at about 10.20 a.m., the battalion moved off by platoons at one hundred yards distance. As it did so the sky cleared and a German aeroplane came over, closely followed by a number of shells which landed in the field which the battalion had just left. Through the suburb of St. Nicholas, along a track to the north of an oil factory, then in artillery formation past the northern outskirts of St. Laurent Blangy the battalion made its way to a railway embankment at a spot where the railway running north-east from Arras to Lens and Lille turns from the Scarpe valley towards a spur running north and south. During this approach march, which ended at 12.50 p.m., the battalion lost an officer and 18 other ranks, mostly near St. Laurent Blangy cemetery.

The 9th Division had attacked north of the River Scarpe with the object of capturing the "Black," "Blue" and "Brown" lines, the last of which lay about three hundred yards west of the village of Athies. The 4th Division was then to pass through to the fourth German system and the village of Fampoux which lay just beyond it and to press on to establish itself on the "Green Line," which was about 1,500 yards east of that place. The 2nd Battalion's part in this plan was to capture about five hundred yards of the German fourth system as its first objective, pushing forward posts to a sunken road east of it and if possible cutting off the enemy's retreat from Fampoux; and, as its second objective, seize about four hundred and fifty yards of the "Green Line" which lay in the fork between two tracks which led north-east from Fampoux, sending patrols forward to the top of the ridge just beyond so as to get observation over the country to the east. It was to dig in on this second objective, though it was to send strong parties forward to capture any German artillery there might be in the vicinity and to keep touch with the enemy.

As the battalion arrived under cover of the railway embankment, it shook out into the formation in which it was to attack. "C" Company (Captain S. W. Howarth), which was to direct, was on the right with its right flank resting on the Athies–Fampoux road. "B" Company (Captain G. G. Bowen) was on its left. "D" (Lieutenant E. L. Hartley) was in support to "C," and "A" (Captain W. R. Fanner) to "B." The 9th Division had not been able to keep up to its time-table, with the result that the battalion had to wait in the open, losing about 150 men in casualties. At 1.30 p.m., however, it moved forward, reaching the "Brown Line" at 2 p.m. "C" and "B" Companies assembled in trenches in that line, with "D" and "A" in trenches behind. Under cover of a creeping barrage, the battalion advanced to the attack at 3.13 p.m. and, except for a few wild and inaccurately aimed shells and some equally wild rifle fire, reached its first objective at 3.45 p.m. without difficulty and practically without casualties. Most of the enemy in the fourth German system came out and surrendered. A few started to run away, but were mostly accounted for by Lewis-gun fire. The Germans dropped many shells into the westernmost trenches of the system, but though they added to the discomfort of the prisoners they did no harm to the British. The battalion's haul at this stage consisted of about 2 officers and 50 other ranks and 9 field guns. The two leading companies pushed out their patrols to their front; and posts were established at 3.50 p.m. in the sunken road which runs due north from the centre of Fampoux and in which four 4.2-inch guns were taken, one being promptly marked in chalk "C Company, 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers." In the meanwhile the Commanding Officer and the adjutant (Captain G. C. Martin, M.C.) were to be seen sitting calmly at the edge of a road, eating sandwiches as if there were no war within a hundred miles.

At 4.12 p.m. the second phase of the battalion's operation began. "D" and "A" Companies passed through "C" and "B" and advanced towards the "Green Line." On reaching the road which runs north from the eastern end of Fampoux towards Gavrelle, they came under heavy machine-gun fire. They tried to push on, but finally had to dig in just east of this road as the ground beyond was flat and swept by fire coming from the direction of the chemical works north of Roeux, of which more will be heard later in this chapter. The line thus reached represented a total advance of four miles from the British position as it was before 9th April. Much of the credit for the success of the attack was officially given to Lieutenant-Colonel Griffin, who not only commanded the battalion with great ability but was also mainly responsible for communication being re-established with the brigade on the left at a critical moment. In this task he was helped by Private H. Ramsden, who volunteered to carry an important message through a very heavy artillery barrage and succeeded in doing so after three other men had failed.

"D" and "A" Companies maintained touch with the units on their flanks and, thanks largely to the energy of Captain W. R.

Fanner who, regardless of himself, walked up and down encouraging the men and supervising the work not only on his own front but also in front of the village of Fampoux as far as the river, a continuous trench was soon dug. It seemed likely that it would be needed, for the enemy were seen to be massing and apparently advancing in artillery formation. In the end no counter-attack developed. The booty gained during this stage amounted to about 100 prisoners and 13 guns. The battalion's casualties were 2 officers and 52 other ranks wounded, 8 other ranks killed or died of wounds and 1 man missing. The wounded had reason to be deeply grateful to the battalion's medical officer, Captain C. R. R. Huxtable, who showed the utmost bravery in attending to and evacuating them. At one stage seven of his stretcher-bearers were buried by the explosion of a shell: he at once organized a party and dug them out, though shells continued to fall all round.

Snow fell heavily during the night; and during the morning of 10th April the enemy was active in sniping and shelling. In the afternoon cavalry moved up with a view to an attack on the Plouvain Gavrelle road and a hill lying athwart it and known as "Greenland Hill," in which the battalion was to be in support. The project was, however, abandoned. A further 73 casualties were suffered during the day.

The next day, 11th, the battalion took a minor part in an attack on Roeux and the station north of it, with Greenland Hill as the final objective. "B" and "C" Companies were in support to the 1st King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, the remainder being in divisional reserve. The attack was launched at noon. At 1.20 p.m. cavalry tried to break through, but were held up by machine-gun fire. The infantry attack was held up for the same reason at 2 p.m. and "D" Company was sent up to come under the command of the King's Own. Even so, little progress was made, and by nightfall "B," "C" and "D" Companies were a short distance only in front of the starting line. Captain G. G. Bowen was conspicuous for his gallant leadership during this difficult stage in the action, as he had been throughout. During the night the troops were reorganized, "A" Company being moved up to continue the line held by other companies. The battalion's casualties during the day totalled 19 all ranks.

Another attack, this time by the 9th Division passing through, was to have taken place on 12th April; but, although the preliminary bombardment was put down, nothing further happened and the battalion was relieved during the night of 12th/13th April, going first to the "Brown Line" and, later on 13th, to some trenches about 2,000 yards north-east of Arras. The decorations awarded to the battalion for the battle included :—

Bar to Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Griffin, D.S.O.

Military Cross

Captain G. G. Bowen. Captain W. R. Fanner.
Captain C. R. R. Huxtable, R.A.M.C.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Private H. Ramsden.

10TH BN. The 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel T. S. H. Wade, D.S.O.) also helped to gain the "Arras" and "Scarpe" battle honours. After six weeks of rest and training in the back area, it moved forward early in April, reaching Arras on 9th April after a march through snow which was described as "generally unpleasant." After some hours of waiting, the men were given shelter in old houses and cellars at the extreme eastern end of the town, near the station, within a few hundred yards of where the front line had been that morning. There was little sleep for anyone, as it was very cold and the discomfort was great. The next day was spent in the cellars, the battalion being in reserve at fifty minutes' notice to move. For the most part 12th April was similar until the evening, when the battalion moved out to occupy some reserve trenches. Snow began to fall as it marched off and lasted through most of the night. After covering three miles in as many hours, the battalion was ushered into a field to await orders. Here it spent four dreary hours, "a cold, shivering mass of humanity, its only protection from the wind and snow its battle kit." Early on the morning of 12th April it was led to the "Brown Line" at Feuchy, where it occupied former German trenches on the western slopes of Orange Hill, a mile south-east of the village and about 2,000 yards south of the position of the 2nd Battalion. Owing to the large amount of artillery and transport which moved forward and settled down near the battalion, some liveliness was developed by the German guns during the day. This continued on 13th and throughout the following night. Though the casualties were few, respirators had to be worn continuously after dark, owing to gas shells being generously mixed with the rest. On the 14th the battalion moved into support trenches on the north side of Orange Hill, in readiness to help in repelling any counter-attack on the newly won positions, but their services were not required. On the 16th a German pigeon arrived at battalion headquarters and Lieutenant-Colonel Wade translated the message which it carried and forwarded it to brigade headquarters. On 18th April the battalion was relieved and moved back to cellars in St. Sauveur, a south-eastern suburb of Arras on the Cambrai road.

1ST BN. The 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel M. Magniac, D.S.O.) in the 29th Division, took part twice in the Battle of Arras, first in a passive role and later in a more active capacity. For the first ten days of April it was resting and training south-west of Arras. On the 11th it marched through the by now familiar snowstorm to Simencourt, which it reached late at night, wet through, to find bare huts and no blankets because the transport had broken down. It marched next day to the Citadel at Arras, passing on the way a

cavalry division which had been moved up the day before to take part in the battle; both men and horses looked absolutely done. On the 13th it moved early to some old German trenches which lay north of Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines and between that village and the River Scarpe. In the evening it advanced to the "Brown Line" near Feuchy Chapel, which stood on the Cambrai road a mile and a half south of the village of that name, with orders to consolidate by means of strong points on the eastern slopes of Orange Hill. On 14th April two battalions of another brigade carried out an attack against the German position east of Monchy-le-Preux, which was at first successful. At about noon, however, the 1st Battalion received a message from the 86th Infantry Brigade stating that the attacking troops were thought to have been cut off, that the 2nd Hampshire Regiment had been ordered to occupy the old trench east of Monchy and that the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers were at once to occupy the trenches vacated by that unit on the southern slopes of Orange Hill and to the west of Monchy. This was done, companies moving over the open in artillery formation. Later in the afternoon, "A" (Captain E. W. Sheppard, M.C.) and "B" (Captain T. Slingsby) Companies were sent up to Monchy to reinforce the Hampshire Regiment, suffering a dozen casualties on the way up. The remaining companies moved up after dark and relieved part of the 88th Brigade in the line. The 86th Brigade was to have attacked on 15th April, but the proposal was abandoned and the battalion remained in Monchy, carrying on work on the defences. The village was a horrible sight: it was full of dead horses as a cavalry brigade had dismounted there and gone forward on foot, leaving their horses under cover of the buildings. They were, however, seen by the Germans who swept the village with artillery and machine guns. Some live horses were found, mostly wounded or in an advanced state of starvation: the worst cases were at once destroyed. Three bed-ridden civilians were also found in a cellar and sent down to Arras on stretchers.

The next few days were comparatively quiet and the battalion was relieved on 18th April, when it went into billets in Arras until 21st. On that date it relieved the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers in reserve at Monchy. At 7.45 a.m. on 22nd a German aeroplane was brought down by rifle and Lewis-gun fire from one of the companies. Private G. Garside tried to reach the machine in daylight. But though he was unable to do this, he went out again at night, bombed off the enemy and brought back its maps and guns. Later in the day the battalion moved back to the "Brown Line"; but at about 12 noon on the 23rd it was ordered forward to occupy the inner defences of Monchy and to hold the south side of the village as the Germans had delivered a heavy counter-attack and had succeeded in driving back the division next on the right and thus exposing the right of the 29th Division. The advance was carried out in artillery formation, "C" Company coming under considerable rifle and machine-gun fire. The rest of the day was spent in digging.

That night, Slingsby was ordered to take his company ("B") to a place known as "Twin Copses," to the north-east of Monchy, in order to relieve the 2nd South Wales Borderers. He succeeded in doing so by dawn; and about that time, "D" Company and "A" Company relieved other troops of the 87th Brigade in front of Arrow Head Copse, which lay to the east of Monchy. The companies were between fifty and eighty strong, as 150 men were attached to the Royal Engineers for the construction of gun-pits south of Orange Hill. Throughout the day of the 24th, German shelling was heavy and the trenches were badly knocked about. The battalion was to have attacked at 4 p.m., but the plan was altered to an assault by the 2nd Royal Fusiliers only, the remainder of the brigade giving support with their Lewis guns and taking advantage of the barrage to push forward patrols and, if possible, to establish their line farther forward. Another order which was countermanded was one for the relief of the battalion during the night of 24th/25th April. This had a very sad consequence. Battalion headquarters had been moved forward to the east side of Monchy. There the Commanding Officer (Lieutenant-Colonel M. Magniac, D.S.O.), the bombing officer (Lieutenant W. R. B. Caseby) and the adjutant (Lieutenant H. S. Bloodworth) were sitting under a waterproof sheet in a recess of a communication trench when a shell struck the edge of the trench, killing Magniac and Caseby and severely wounding the adjutant. The death of Meredith Magniac brought to an end a career of service to the Regiment which had begun in 1898: he had, in 1915, returned to it from staff employment because he loved his men, who loved him.

German shelling was heavy throughout the 25th, but both on that day and on the day before men of the battalion had taken toll of German infantrymen who freely exposed themselves, Captain T. Slingsby accounting for at least ten. During the night of 25th/26th April, guides were again sent to meet a relieving unit. This time, after great difficulties, three companies were relieved by about 7 a.m. on 26th, but Slingsby could find no one to relieve him and, after exchanging messages with several neighbouring units, got an order from the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment to return to Arras without relief, too late, however, for him to get his company out before daylight. Moreover, if he had moved without being relieved he would have left a dangerous gap in the line through which the enemy could have reached the Twin Copses and so outflanked the line in two directions. He therefore remained at Twin Copses throughout the 26th—shelled by German 5.9-inch and 8-inch howitzers, which knocked out five runners whom he sent with reports to battalion headquarters—until dark, when he was relieved by the King's Own and marched to Arras, where he arrived about 11.45 a.m. and, with his very hungry company, ate up the contents of the 17th Division's canteen! During these four days, the battalion lost 2 officers and 25 other ranks killed, 4 officers and 137 other ranks wounded, and 5 other ranks missing. These casualties included 13 battalion headquarter

runners killed or wounded. Captain T. Slingsby was awarded the Military Cross for holding his trench for two days and two nights under heavy shell fire although short of food; and Second-Lieutenant R. Downes received it for his cool handling of his platoon under heavy artillery fire. Private G. Garside received the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Médaille Militaire for much good work and particularly for his gallantry in connection with the fallen German aeroplane.

2ND BN.

After its share in the opening phase of the Battle of Arras, the 2nd Battalion (Major H. W. Glenn, Duke of Wellington's Regiment, who had replaced Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Griffin, D.S.O., on the latter's promotion to command a brigade) rested in the back area till 29th April, when it moved to a camp of tents and of tarpaulins stretched over old trenches between St. Nicholas and St. Laurent-Blangy, close to Arras, thereby qualifying for the battle honour of "Arleux." The next day, with a strength of 20 officers and 430 other ranks, it relieved the 22nd Northumberland Fusiliers in the line to the east of Fampoux and about 1,500 yards north-north-west of Roeux. The trenches were incomplete, and nowhere were they deep enough to protect men standing upright. The right of the sector rested on the Arras–Douai railway, which at this point ran along an embankment. Not only, however, was part of the trench line bent back towards the right, but between the end of the trench actually held by the battalion and the railway was a gap of about one hundred and twenty yards in which lay a short trench not held by either side. The relief was complete by 2 a.m. on 1st May. The day was quiet, but at sunset, and at dawn on the following day, the enemy's guns shelled the position and caused some casualties. The British "heavies" spent the 2nd, from 8.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m., in shelling the buildings in and near Roeux station and the chemical works which stood two hundred and fifty yards to the south-east of it. During this bombardment, "D" Company (Captain C. Gregory) was moved back and sent to the right to occupy the refused stretch of the trenches.

At 9.30 p.m. the company moved back to its previous position, but was later ordered to extend to the right so as to cover the gap between its right and the railway embankment, and also to occupy the short trench which has been mentioned and which was reported by aircraft to be empty. At midnight Gregory sent out a patrol under Second-Lieutenant A. E. Rogers, who reported that this trench was held by the enemy. Gregory informed battalion headquarters accordingly and was ordered to continue with the filling of the gap. He therefore decided to attempt deployment to the right over open ground. At 2 a.m. on 3rd May the company began to crawl out towards the embankment. Unfortunately, this part of the line was overlooked by the ruins of a building in which some German snipers were posted. The moon was intensely bright, the movement was seen, and a number of casualties occurred. Nevertheless, Rogers with a platoon twelve men strong and Second-Lieutenant W. E.

Collins with a platoon of twenty-two carried on, though by now the German rifle fire was so heavy that movement was very difficult. Finally Collins, his platoon serjeant and two men got close to the embankment. At 3.30 a.m. the serjeant was killed and Collins was wounded. "D" Company, sorely depleted, was strung out over about two hundred and fifty yards of ground with a firmly held trench close in front of it.

In the meanwhile the rest of the battalion had also been getting into position for an attack which was to take place at 3.45 a.m. on 3rd May. "B" Company, with "C" in support, was on the right, south of the railway; "D," with "A" (Second-Lieutenant H. Cardwell) in support, was on the left. The battalion's first objective was the chemical works and Roeux station; its second, some trenches about 1,400 yards farther to the north-east The chemical works were about five hundred yards from the starting line and the station about half that distance. At zero the battalion advanced behind a creeping barrage. Owing to its weakness, the length of its front and the darkness, "D" Company, north of the railway, was held up almost at once by the isolated trench and also by machine-gun fire coming from some houses at a cross-roads three hundred yards north of the station which had not been dealt with by the artillery. Heavy losses were inflicted on it and on "A" Company. An attempt was made to outflank the buildings, but without success; and the remnants of these companies had to take up a position in the original front line.

In the meanwhile, "B" and "C" Companies, south of the railway, had met with little opposition and succeeded in pushing on under cover of the barrage. They took the buildings immediately in front of them and the chemical works. When the barrage moved on after a short pause, they advanced in accordance with the time-table which had been laid down and seem to have made considerable progress towards the second objective. But owing to the darkness and the height of the railway embankment, they were unaware of the failure of the companies on the left. Moreover, the brigade next on the right had failed to capture Roeux Chateau, about five hundred yards south of the station; and when daylight came its occupants made their presence felt with rifles and machine guns. The result was that the Germans were able to re-establish their line between the station and the Chateau and that not one man of "B" and "C" Companies came back.

The battalion's losses on this day were 4 officers wounded, 1 officer wounded and missing, and 9 officers missing; and 17 other ranks killed, 84 wounded and 174 missing.

An Epilogue to the Battle of Arras

10th Battalion

Although the Battle of Arras is regarded officially as having come to an end on 4th May, 1917, the Commander-in-Chief directed that attention should continue to be distracted from his preparations for a big offensive in the Ypres area by the maintenance of activity near Arras, the required effect being obtained by "a careful selection of important objectives of a limited nature, deliberate preparation of attack, concentration of artillery and economy of infantry." In pursuance of this policy, the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel T. S. H. Wade, D.S.O.) relieved the 9th Duke of Wellington's Regiment on 11th May in trenches south of Gavrelle and at 6.30 a.m. the next day attacked with the object of taking two German trenches opposite it and establishing six posts beyond them. Owing to part of the battalion being led astray during the relief, it got no rest that night, but had to go straight to its assembly trenches. Moreover, while the battalion was moving to those trenches a German aeroplane appeared and flew along the line, dropping lights. The attack was made by three companies and was intended to be a surprise ; but the Germans were evidently expecting it and their barrage came down the moment the advance began. The first wave of the left company, "A" (Captain A. J. Barrow), was held up a short distance from the enemy trenches by artillery, rifle and machine-gun fire, but was carried forward by the second wave under Barrow himself. A great part of the company entered the German trench and stayed there for about half an hour, fighting with bayonet and bomb against persistent attacks from both flanks. Eventually, after losing all its officers except Barrow and using all its bombs, it was forced out and compelled to retire to its starting line, where Barrow insisted on remaining with it for several hours, although he had been seriously wounded early in the attack. A small number of the centre company, "B" (Major D. C. E. ff. Comyn), entered the German trench with "A" Company and shared their fortunes. The rest were mown down by a machine gun which had been pushed forward into an emplacement in front of the trench. The survivors were driven back to their own trenches. The right company, "D" (Captain R. E. Harriss), never reached the German trench and suffered very heavily from the same machine gun. The discomfort of the much-shaken remnants of the attacking troops was increased by German shelling of their trenches for the rest of the day. The stretcher-bearers behaved most gallantly in going out in daylight to bring in wounded, without regard to the activity of enemy snipers. Many wounded men crawled back during the night and some were brought back from close to the German wire, but one officer, Second-Lieutenant C. Charnley, lay out for three days, sustaining himself on iron rations and cigarettes before he was able to make his way back. Captain A. J. Barrow was awarded the Military Cross for his fine work, and the Brigade Commander stated that he considered that the failure of the attack

10TH BN.

was not in any way due to a lack of dash or initiative on the part of the company officers. But the day had cost the battalion 13 of its 15 company officers and 226 other ranks in casualties, which can hardly be described as "economy of infantry."

A Spring Miscellany

The arrival of the First-Line Territorial battalions in France has already been noted. They were soon to be afforded some training in what amounted to a night operation, some of whose features appertained to trench warfare and some to open warfare. The 125th Infantry Brigade, which comprised the First-Line Territorial battalions, went into the line near Epéhy on 8th April, 1917, and took part in a minor operation on the night of 12th/13th April, with the object of advancing the line of outposts in conjunction with a similar movement by the neighbouring division. Three parties left the brigade's lines at 9 p.m. One party, consisting of a company of the 1st 7th Battalion under Captain W. Kelly, was to seize a wood known as "No. 12 Copse." The leading platoon, under Lieutenant J. Swindells, after some difficulty in maintaining touch between its sections, reached the copse and met with considerable opposition from an enemy body of an estimated strength of about sixty. Some Germans got behind the platoon and Swindells withdrew it to the edge of the wood and reorganized it. He was wounded in the mouth and unable to give any further orders. In the meanwhile, a supporting platoon, accompanied by Kelly, missed its way and, after a detour to the south, met Swindells's platoon on its way back. Kelly took command of both platoons and, calling up a third platoon, advanced through the copse, entrenching on the far side of it. The second party, two platoons of 1st/7th Battalion under Second-Lieutenant F. W. Andexer, moved from Tetard Wood (seven hundred yards east of Epéhy) towards a wood known as Nameless Copse, preceded by a body of scouts under Second-Lieutenant F. W. Irving which had a roving commission to search the ground covered by the whole operation and to clear it of any hostile patrols. The scouts came across a German patrol which was lying on the ground and which fired. The scouts took cover and Irving shouted to Andexer who promptly extended his platoon and moved them quickly forward in an endeavour to surround the Germans. The latter ran away and could not be overtaken. Andexer then led his platoon forward and dug in on his objective. The third party, which consisted of two platoons of the 1st 5th Battalion under Lieutenant E. E. Jenkins, reached its allotted goal without opposition and also dug in. A company of the 1st 6th Battalion was placed at the disposal of the 1st 7th during this operation in case support was needed; it was used to relieve Kelly's company when the latter had consolidated its new line.

1ST/7TH Bn

1ST/5TH Bn.

1ST/6TH Bn

The next day, 13th April, Malassise Farm, a large building standing about 1,500 yards south-east of Epéhy, which was occupied by a platoon of the 1st/6th Battalion and some men of the 1st/7th,

was very heavily shelled. The cellar was blown in, and a number of the garrison buried. In spite of the continued shelling, Private R. Stock of 1st/6th, Private J. Davies of the 1st 7th and some others volunteered to dig them out. They succeeded in extricating all those who were still alive. Stock and Davies were awarded the Military Medal for their gallantry. 1ST/6TH AND 1ST/7TH BNS.

A few days later, on 18th April, at 3 a.m. a party of 2 officers and 24 other ranks of 2nd/7th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel S. H. Hingley, Middlesex Regiment) left "D" Sap at Givenchy with the object of entering the enemy's trench, securing identifications and bombing dug-outs. The enemy were found to be alert, however, and the raiders were forced to retire under heavy fire. Serjeant J. Sillitoe displayed great gallantry and succeeded in bringing back to his trench under fire Lieutenant W. Robinson, who had been wounded. He was awarded the Military Medal. Three men were wounded and 5 missing. 2ND/7TH BN.

The sister battalion, 2nd/8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. Gordon Roberts, 4th South Lancashire Regiment), shortly afterwards had a disturbing experience in the same sector. At "Stand to" early on 2nd May, the enemy blew a mine between two saps occupied by the battalion which had the curious effect of exposing to view a large part of the German line hitherto hidden. Major G. H. Ramsbottom, second-in-command of the battalion, was partially buried and received severe shock and head injuries from falling debris. 2ND/8TH BN.

Exactly a week later and a few hundred yards farther north, another battalion of the brigade, the 3rd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. S. Bates, D.S.O., London Rifle Brigade) carried out a most successful raid with the co-operation of the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers. A few nights before, Lieutenant F. H. Crouch, 3rd/5th Battalion, and the Brigade Intelligence Officer, Second-Lieutenant D. Gray, 2nd/6th Battalion, carried out a close reconnaissance of the wire in bright moonlight. The Royal Engineers not only placed and fired a Bangalore torpedo which opened a way for the raiders, but also discharged several hundred Mills bombs simultaneously from projectors by way of a preliminary bombardment. To judge by letters captured a few days later, the enemy was very considerably shaken. The raiding party consisted of Lieutenant F. H. Crouch, Second-Lieutenant S. E. Reid, Second-Lieutenant J. W. Pickett and thirty-seven N.C.Os. and men of "D" Company. It spent less than five minutes in the German trenches, but captured several men of the 3rd Bavarian Reserve Regiment (1st Bavarian Reserve Division)—a very valuable identification—who had evidently only recently joined as their equipment and kit were new and complete. Highly complimentary messages of congratulation were received from the Corps, Divisional and Brigade Commanders. Crouch was wounded but remained on duty; three men were wounded; otherwise there were no casualties. 3RD/5TH BN.

As if determined not to be beaten in a competition, the battalion which the 3rd/5th replaced in the 197th Infantry Brigade also

carried out a useful raid at Ypres on the night of 11th/12th May. Second-Lieutenant T. Dickinson, of the 2nd 5th Battalion (Lieuten-
2ND/5TH BN. ant-Colonel B. Best-Dunkley), was given only a few hours' notice of the raid, but made all the arrangements with the artillery and trench mortars himself and then took out a party of twelve men under cover of a creeping barrage. This had, however, not completely destroyed the German wire and the party had some difficulty in getting through. While efforts were being made to cut the wire, they were quite heavily bombed from their right. After some little delay, they succeeded in entering the enemy trench. The party then divided: one squad went to the left for twenty-five yards, but met nobody except one German who hurriedly retreated; the other advanced to the right through three bays from which the garrison had withdrawn and bayoneted one of a party of Germans found in the next section. The party then withdrew with the loss of one man killed and one man wounded. Dickinson had done much good work previously. The day before this raid he had collided with a German bombing party while out on patrol and had driven it off with rifle and Lewis-gun fire. He then followed it up to look for wounded and stayed out for two hours. The night after his raid, he went out quite alone into No Man's Land during a hostile raid on the battalion on the right and brought in a wounded officer and man, going back later and bringing in two British dead. In two days he received five congratulatory messages from the Brigade and Divisional Commanders and from the Commanding Officer. He also received the Military Cross.

Late the same day, 12th May, a very successful raid was carried
20TH BN. out by the 20th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. Vaughan) at Pontruet, near the southern end of the British sector, in which area it had been since the advance to the Hindenburg Line. It was resting at the time; but, after several previous reconnaissances very skilfully and gallantly carried out, Second-Lieutenant R. Irvine took up to the front line at 8.45 p.m. that evening a party from the battalion consisting of himself, Second-Lieutenant A. N. Kennedy and eighty N.C.Os. and men. The objective was a crater half a mile north-west of Pontruet, known as Fisher Crater, which was believed to be held by the enemy in advance of his main line of trenches. The raiders set out at 11.30 p.m. in two parties. They were fired on after advancing about fifty yards. The crater was at once rushed and the German garrison of fifteen fled. The left-hand raiding party occupied the crater while the other pursued the enemy and overtook two of them, shooting one and bayoneting the other. The remainder of the Germans ran into the barrage which the British artillery and machine guns put down at 11.45 p.m. with the object of isolating the German garrison and covering the raiders' withdrawal; and they suffered further casualties. At 12.15 a.m. Irvine's party retired in accordance with his orders, his only casualties being two men wounded. Irvine received the Military Cross for his good work on this and previous occasions.

The pressure maintained on the Arras front to distract attention from activities farther north continued until well into June. The 1st Battalion (Major A. J. W. Blencowe, M.C.) took part in one of the last episodes of this process. It went into the line near Monchy in the ordinary course of events on 20th May and spent a reasonably quiet period of ten days in trench routine. After being warned for an attack to take place on 27th May, the battalion took part in an attack on Infantry Hill, east of Monchy, late on 30th May, in conjunction with the 16th Middlesex Regiment on the right and the 8th East Lancashire Regiment on the left. At 10.30 p.m. "D" Company (Second-Lieutenant R. H. Stubbs), which was to carry out the assault, began crawling forward to a tape laid parallel to the objective. They were followed by the supports, "A" and "B" Companies. By 11.15 p.m. they were all in position. But, owing to the moonlight and his own flares, the enemy evidently detected this movement; for he put down a heavy barrage with artillery and machine guns on the front and support lines. At zero, 11.30 p.m., an intense barrage opened on the German trenches and the battalion began its advance. The enemy appeared to be leaving his positions and a premature message was received stating that the objective had been taken. But in fact the attack was held up on the right and only the left flank succeeded in reaching the German trench. Three times Stubbs led his men forward with the utmost disregard of danger, rallying and re-forming them under heavy machine-gun fire after each unsuccessful attempt. He was twice wounded, the second time severely. In the end the attack had to be abandoned and the original line reoccupied. Nevertheless the battalion tried, though in vain, to help with the fire of Stokes mortars, Lewis and machine guns, a party of the 16th Middlesex Regiment who were isolated between the two lines. The battalion's casualties were 1 officer missing and 5 wounded, 6 other ranks killed, 43 wounded and 22 missing. Second-Lieutenant R. H. Stubbs was awarded the Military Cross. 1st Bn.

A little farther south, at Havrincourt Wood, Serjeant O. Durrans, of the 1st/6th Battalion, gave an excellent example on 4th June of the sort of individual enterprise which did so much to keep up an offensive spirit in a "quiet" sector. At great personal risk he crawled a quarter of a mile into No Man's Land, where he spent two and a half hours and accounted for four German snipers though he was under heavy machine-gun and sniping fire all the time. Eventually he was hit; but he managed to crawl back to his post, with the satisfaction of knowing that he had silenced all sniping in his part of the line. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. 1st/6th Bn.

The Battle of Messines

"MESSINES, 1917"

9th and 11th Battalions

One of the purposes of the Battle of Arras—and the only purpose of its continuance—was, as has been explained earlier in this chapter, to distract German attention from the preparations which were being made for the Commander-in-Chief's main offensive of the year 1917 near Ypres. An essential part of those measures was the capture of the Messines ridge, which afforded the enemy good observation over the ground on which any guns would be stationed, and over which all troops and transport must pass, for an attack launched east of Ypres. Until that feature was in British hands, it would be foolhardy to proceed further with the principal plan. Preliminaries to its seizure had, in any case, been in progress from early in 1916 and more intensively since January, 1917. There is not the space to recount in detail the care expended on the planning of the work by the Second Army Commander, General Sir Herbert Plumer, his chief of staff, Major-General C. H. Harington, and their team of devoted helpers; the digging of twenty mines under the German positions, the countermining and the subterranean fights between the rival tunnellers; the realistic rehearsals by all of the parts they were to take on "the Day"; or the meticulous time-tables for the approach of the many units involved and the imaginative thoroughness with which the administrative arrangements were made. It was one of the most perfectly planned and executed battles of the whole war. Two battalions of the Regiment were involved in it, the one actively, the other passively.

11TH BN. After the Battle of the Ancre Heights in October, 1916, the 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. C. de R. Martin, M.C., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) moved to Ploegsteert, near Armentières, and spent a winter and spring of routine in and out of the trenches there and at Neuve Eglise, going to the back area for five days in May, 1917. On 5th June it moved to bivouacs at Breemeerschen, near Neuve Eglise, where the stores required for a big attack were issued. At 8.15 p.m. the next day it moved to assembly trenches at Souvenir Farm, just east of Wulverghem, behind the 13th Cheshire Regiment (commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel L. H. K. Finch, who was to command the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers at Colchester nearly twenty years later). All companies were in position by 12.45 a.m. on 7th June, in spite of German shelling of the assembly positions from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. with gas and tear-gas shells which caused few casualties but much inconvenience. At 1.10 a.m. came a welcome issue of rum, a contrast to the mixture of cold tea and lemon with which every man's water bottle had been filled under divisional arrangements. (One wonders whether there was much difficulty during the battle in enforcing the standing order that no soldier shall drink from his water bottle without an officer's leave.)

The battalion's final objective was, in effect, the main road from

Messines to Ypres running south and north along the top of the Messines ridge. It lay about 3,000 yards from the British front line east of Wulverghem, from which there was a gentle slope downward towards the enemy, followed by a sharp drop to the River Steenbeck. This watercourse was about four feet in width and lay in ground which was very marshy during the winter or wet weather but was usually quite dry in the summer except for occasional pools. The "river" was therefore not a natural obstacle. But it might be made into an awkward obstruction by skilful labour. Moreover the valley was so deep and the river itself consequently so hidden from direct observation that there could be no certainty that the wire, which was known to be there, had been properly cut by the artillery fire. On the east side of this valley the ground rose steeply at first to a series of farms, two of which (Middle Farm and Four Huns Farm) were situated on the crest of the ridge and on the main road. The buildings were all naturally strong and had been turned into small forts.

The plan was for the two leading battalions of the 74th Infantry Brigade to take all the German trenches up to the Steenbeck, followed closely by the other two battalions, which were then to "leap-frog" through them and capture the trench running along the crest and known as October Support Trench. Another division was then to pass through and capture the final objective of the operation, about 1,500 yards farther east. Zero was at 3.10 a.m. on 7th June, when nineteen mines exploded under the German front-line trenches on the six miles attacked. At the same moment the artillery opened fire: that covering the front of the 25th Division consisted of 126 18-pounder guns, 35 3.5-inch howitzers and 72 "heavies." There was an almost simultaneous soaring upwards of S O S rockets from the German lines a few seconds later: as far as the eye could see, the effect was that of a gigantic display of fireworks. The 13th Cheshire Regiment advanced behind the barrage, followed closely by "A" (Major E. Munday) and "B" (Lieutenant E. E. Sharp) Companies of the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers in artillery formation. The German counter-barrage came down on the British front-line system and No Man's Land in about four minutes. It missed these companies but caused some casualties among the carrying parties behind them. At 3.25 a.m. "C" (Captain M. A. Ward) and "D" (Lieutenant C. C. Hadfield) Companies left the assembly trenches in rear of the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, the left leading unit of the brigade.

A strongish wind was blowing. Dawn was breaking, to the accompaniment of a slight mist. The half-light and the mist, when added to the dust thrown up by the barrage and to the obliteration by the latter of German trenches which should have served as landmarks, made it very difficult for the troops to maintain their direction, and several parties of them lost their way for a time. But they had carried out several practices on similar ground and they had studied the operation so carefully both on the ground and on a large-

scale plan that they were soon able to get back on their proper line of advance, without being left behind by the creeping barrage. At 3.45 a.m. the leading companies of the 11th Battalion crossed the Steenbeck, which was found not to exist except for a few shell holes full of water, and passed through the 13th Cheshire Regiment. At 4.7 a.m. "A" and "B" Companies had captured their first objective Occur Trench, which ran north and south about 1,300 yards north-west of Messines and just east of the Steenbeck. With it they took two machine guns and forty-one prisoners. During this phase of the action, a gap appeared between the 1st Wiltshire Regiment and the division next on the left, and casualties were caused by a machine gun firing from Lumm's Farm in this gap. Major S. S. Ogilvie, D.S.O., of the Wiltshire Regiment, took a company of his unit and some parties collected from other units, including the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, and captured it, killing and taking prisoner its entire garrison of forty-one.

In the meanwhile, "C" and "D" Companies had advanced and, at 4.50 a.m., passed through "A" and "B" Companies and took October Trench which lay eight hundred yards beyond Occur Trench and ran almost due north from the village of Messines. The booty included two machine guns. Some resistance was encountered at Middle Farm, which was situated one hundred and fifty yards beyond October Trench and on the main Messines–Ypres road. "A" and "B" Companies, which had been reorganized, moved up to help "C" and "D." "A" carried out a turning movement to the left, while "C" Company delivered a frontal attack, helped by "B" Company of the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles on the right. At 5.5 a.m. "C" and "D" Companies were able to push on to their final objective, October Support Trench, which ran parallel to, and on the east side of, the main road. Its garrison did not stay to welcome the new tenants, but withdrew, leaving four machine guns behind. Some casualties were suffered from German snipers while "C" and "D" were waiting for the barrage to lift from October Support Trench; but the nuisance was speedily suppressed by rifle and rifle-grenade fire. Second-Lieutenant M. L. Bernstein led his platoon with great skill and dash during this stage of the battle. Although he was wounded before the advance to the battalion's final objective, he refused to leave his men, but took part in the capture of a number of prisoners and in the reorganization of the position until he was ordered to go to the dressing station. Company Serjeant-Major J. W. Nolan also distinguished himself and commanded a platoon with great dash and ability after the officer had been hit. His personal example and offensive spirit were a great help to his company generally and contributed largely to the speed with which they made an unusually long advance.

It was a day on which boundaries between units and companies counted for little and the initiative of individuals counted for much. A party of "A" Company attached itself to the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and helped in the capture of Swayne's Farm,

two hundred and fifty yards south of Middle Farm. A mixed party of "A" and "D" Companies, under Second-Lieutenant H. Skelton, joined the 1st Wiltshire Regiment in ejecting the enemy from Four Huns Farm, a large building three hundred and fifty yards north of Middle Farm, and a concrete dug-out on the farther side of the main road. Private J. Mack displayed great gallantry, frequently leading assaults and entering German trenches before the barrage had properly lifted from them.

The battalion's final objective having been taken, other troops passed through to attack the next positions, and "C" Company began to make a strong point between Four Huns Farm and Middle Farm, while "A" started to dig a communication trench westwards from it. "D" Company consolidated its hold on October Support Trench and "B" reorganized in October Trench itself. At 11 a.m. orders were received by the battalion to hand over its dispositions to the 13th Cheshire and 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiments, and to take up a line along Occur Avenue—a continuation south-eastwards of Occur Trench—lying about six hundred and fifty yards back from Middle Farm. The rest of that day and the whole of the next day were spent in the work of consolidating these rear positions in case the enemy counter-attacked in great strength. At 11 p.m. on 9th June the battalion moved forward again to take over October Trench, October Support Trench and Regina Trench. The battalion suffered a grievous loss that night in the death of their beloved Quartermaster, Lieutenant W. Bowyer, who was killed by a shell. He had been with the battalion from the beginning and had proved a most devoted administrator whose first thought was ever the comfort and welfare of the men. The 10th June was spent in completing and wiring the new line, and on the 11th the battalion withdrew to peaceful bivouacs about a mile north-west of Neuve Eglise.

The battalion's achievements drew generous praise from the Brigade Commander, Brigadier-General H. K. Bethell, who frankly admitted that his previous doubts whether troops with such little service could successfully carry out an operation of that nature had been entirely unjustified. The Military Cross was awarded to Captain M. A. Ward and Second-Lieutenant M. L. Bernstein; the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Company Serjeant-Major J. W. Nolan and Private J. Mack; and Military Medals to Serjeant W. H. Fowden (attached to the 74th Trench Mortar Battery), Serjeants J. Ashley, P. Blyth, J. F. Haslam, W. A. Tinckler and G. Turner, Corporals J. R. Farragher and T. Robertson, Lance-Corporals H. Coquard and T. Hodgkinson, and Privates A. Eastwood, H. Hollywood, A. V. Lock and C. A. Rosser. The casualties had not been unduly heavy: out of an attacking strength of 22 officers and 601 other ranks, the battalion lost 1 officer and 33 other ranks killed, 7 officers and 136 other ranks wounded, and 6 men missing. Its booty totalled 6 machine guns, one 7.5-inch heavy mortar and 242 prisoners.

The other battalion of the Regiment to earn the battle honour

9TH BN. "Messines" was the 9th (Lieutenant-Colonel E. C. da Costa), which worked in the forward area during the action and stood by throughout 7th June in readiness to take part in the attack on the final objective if help was needed. After the battle, the battalion occupied reserve lines from 10th to 18th June near Four Huns Farm, in the capture of which the 11th Battalion had taken a part. In an order sent out to companies of the 9th Battalion during this period, the curious word "decksies" appears: "dixies" was what was meant.

2ND/6TH BN. The successes of the Second-Line Territorial units were continued by the 2nd 6th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. L. Anderton, 6th West Yorkshire Regiment) near Givenchy early on 13th June, when "A" (Captain J. L. Lee, M.C.) and "D" (Captain E. J. Jones) Companies entered the enemy's trenches on a front of two hundred yards and penetrated them to a depth of one hundred and thirty yards with the objects of diverting attention from the operations near Messines, of inflicting losses, of lowering German morale while increasing our own, and of obtaining identifications. Surprise was to a large extent lost by the need for cutting the enemy's very thick wire by means of a bombardment spread over several days; the Germans naturally retaliated and added to the difficulties of the raiding party by putting gas shells on to the communication trench up which it had to reach its assembly position and on to No Man's Land during the advance. Nevertheless, thanks partly to daring reconnaissances on previous nights by Second-Lieutenant J. H. Johnston, the attack was launched at 3 a.m. with success, "A" Company being on the right and "D" on the left. The party stayed in the German front, support and reserve trenches for nearly an hour, bombing dug-outs and inflicting a number of casualties. No prisoners were secured, but a light machine gun was captured and several identifications were obtained from the corpses of those killed. The Germans counter-attacked vigorously by bombing along the trenches and also by moving over the open. But their efforts were held off until the time appointed for withdrawal when, under cover of a smoke screen provided by a party of Royal Engineers, the two companies retired. Then, however, their casualties began, one of the first to fall being the commander of the attack, Captain E. J. Jones. Altogether the raid cost the battalion 2 officers and 5 other ranks killed, 3 officers and 54 other ranks wounded and 19 men missing. Private J. Whitehead of "D" Company stayed in No Man's Land throughout the day and brought back useful information at night. Another man had an even more remarkable adventure: Private McAteer became separated from "A" Company before its withdrawal; he was seen between the German support and reserve lines trying to bring back a wounded comrade, the German counter-attack passed over him, but he lay low, made his way cautiously to the German front line in the afternoon and finally, at about 6 p.m., climbed the enemy parapet and walked back to his own lines without a shot being fired. The behaviour of the Germans after this

raid was peculiar in other ways. "The History of the 2nd 6th Lancashire Fusiliers" relates that soon after the raiding party had returned a German climbed on to his parapet and beckoned to the Englishmen who were on the lookout for stragglers. Both sides sent out small parties into No Man's Land and began to clear the dead and wounded, it being agreed, however, that neither side should cross the half-way line between the trenches. One of the Germans knew Manchester and said he wondered what was on at "The Palace" that week! For their work on the raid Captain J. L. Lee and Second-Lieutenant J. H. Johnston received the Military Cross; Military Medals were awarded to Serjeant W. E. Bailey, Corporal T. Barnes, Lance-Corporal J. W. Pratt, Private H. Cowell and Private H. Flux. The party marched to Locon on the following day and were inspected and warmly congratulated by the Commander-in-Chief, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig. "D" Company of the 3rd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. S. Bates) helped to bring in wounded during this raid, Corporal R. Seed winning the Distinguished Conduct Medal for courageous work in finding and bringing back casualties in daylight. 3RD/5TH BN.

The whole of this Second-Line brigade received very high compliments, when they left the Givenchy sector to go to the Belgian coast towards the end of June, from Lieutenant-General Sir R. C. B. Haking, K.C.B., commanding the XI Corps, and from the commander of the 2nd Division, which relieved the 66th (East Lancashire) Division, Major-General C. E. Pereira, a Guardsman, who said that his division had never taken over a line under more comfortable circumstances. 3RD/5TH 2ND/6TH, 2ND/7TH AND 2ND/8TH BNS

At 1.30 a.m. on 1st July the 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Irvine, C.M.G., D.S.O.) carried out a raid at Honnecourt Wood, near the southern end of the British line. A party consisting of an officer and twenty-five other ranks of the 20th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. Vaughan) formed a protective screen until 1 a.m. while the raiding party formed up facing its objective. The attacking force was composed of sixty men of "W" Company under Second-Lieutenants F. W. Hobson and G. S. Cormack and forty men of "Y" Company under Second-Lieutenants S. G. Wolfe and L. W. Topham. Although the distance to the objective was four hundred yards, the advance was successfully carried through under a barrage to the farthest edge of the wood. Unfortunately, the night became wet and very overcast just as the advance began, and the darkness was so intense that the Germans who were found managed to escape with the exception of one man of the 124th Infantry Regiment who was taken prisoner. The raiders made their way back, with the loss of only one man wounded, their return being greatly helped by small lamps which had been put out to guide them, though these drew the enemy's fire to some extent. 18TH BN. 20TH BN.

During June the Second-Line battalions were joined on the Belgian coast by three of the Salford units, the 15th, 16th and 19th Battalions. The 15th Battalion has a claim to be regarded as the 15TH 16TH AND 19TH BNS

first British unit to occupy the extreme left of the line, as it relieved the 165th French Infantry Regiment on 18th June. On 5th July a platoon of the 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. G. Harrison, Manchester Regiment) under Captain R. Morton and Lieutenant A. G. Edghill, had the honour of giving a demonstration of an attack on a strong point in the presence of His Majesty King George V at Ghyvelde. In spite of the initial attractions of bathing and other seaside amenities, all accounts agree in describing the sector occupied by the British near Dunkerque and Nieuport as thoroughly unpleasant. The front line was straddled on both sides of the River Yser and of several canals connected with it, across which communication was maintained by means of frail or floating bridges, frequently broken by enemy shells. The trench system consisted of breastworks in most places, and swamps abounded. No dug-outs of any strength could be made to protect the troops against the constant shelling from German guns of all calibres, including naval ordnance. The water obstacle between the two sides made constant raids and reconnaissances necessary, to discover the enemy's dispositions and to conceal the active preparations which were being made for a big attack on the coast, including a landing near Ostend, which was to have been an adjunct to a successful attack at Ypres, but which had to be cancelled when the Third Battle of Ypres stuck in the mud at Passchendaele. On 11th July Captain C. W. Smith and two platoons of "B" Company
16TH BN. of the 16th Battalion attempted a raid to the east of Nieuport, which was frustrated by uncut wire. On the 16th Second-Lieutenant J. McClymont and three sections of the same company delivered a successful bombing attack on an enemy sap in the same area, killing at least two members of a German wiring party which was encountered. The following night Lieutenant W. N. Watts, with three sections of "C" and "D" Companies of the 16th Battalion, set out to attack the post which had baffled Smith's party on the 11th: in No Man's Land they met a German raiding party about thirty strong and, after sharp fighting, drove them back and bombed them in their own trenches, inflicting heavy casualties. On 22nd July
2ND/7TH BN. Private W. Lennon, of the 2nd/7th Battalion, displayed great gallantry in rescuing some wounded men of another unit during an unusually heavy bombardment, being subsequently awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for this and a number of similar acts. Three days later, on 25th July, Second-Lieutenant F. A. Brown and Serjeant J. Ridings of that unit swam across the Yser Canal in the dark and brought back valuable and much-needed information about the enemy's dispositions on the far bank; Serjeant Ridings received the Military Medal for his share in this exploit. Swimming reconnaissances were also carried out at this time by Second-Lieutenant I. Lloyd Jones, Serjeant H. Aldred, Lance-Corporal D. Sheehan, and Privates W. Gill and V. Lewis, all of the 2nd/7th Battalion. Not
2ND/8TH BN. to be outdone, the 2nd/8th Battalion performed a similar reconnaissance on 29th July, when Privates Windsor and H. L. Phillips swam across the Yser Canal at 11.10 p.m. and landed behind the

enemy's lines. They reported that the area in which they found themselves was not occupied by the Germans and that the ground was fairly firm. Phillips was awarded the Military Medal.

Elsewhere, even so early in the year, the ground was not always firm. The 18th Battalion had to record on 19th July that when the 18TH BN. Corps Commander visited the line near Epéhy that day he was reported to have stuck in the mud. The account adds, with evident relief, that no adverse criticism followed this visit.

A good deal of banter seems to have been exchanged between the 18th Battalion and the units of another division on its right. In the middle of July several pieces of information were received which indicated that the Germans intended to deliver a strong raid on the front of that division, which however refused to believe in it, even when a deserter told the 20th Battalion that 400 enemy troops were 20TH BN. being trained for it. By 21st July, everybody was certain that an attack was imminent—except the —th Division. The 18th and 20th Battalions consequently were able to mingle a sense of triumph with their discomfort when they were very heavily shelled on the 26th by the German artillery which was supporting a raid on the front of that division! The 18th Battalion helped to deal with the attacking infantry; and Private A. Mizon was awarded the Military Medal for his gallantry and soldierly conduct in keeping his Lewis gun in action during the bombardment, although severely wounded.

The last event to be recorded before passing on to the big offensive of 1917 is a raid carried out on Tino Trench, near Vendhuille, on the night of 29th/30th July, by the 20th Battalion, 20TH BN. helped by a diversion on its left created by the 17th Battalion. 17TH BN. Lieutenant F. J. Toms laid out tapes on which a party composed of Second-Lieutenants H. MacLeod and L. Taylor and 68 other ranks under the command of Second-Lieutenant F. J. Butler, formed up. At midnight the raiders moved forward behind a creeping barrage in two detachments. The right party was preceded by a few men carrying a Bangalore torpedo to complete the cutting of the wire, but the bombing section would not wait for them to do their work and, putting "traverser mats" on the wire, crossed into the German front line just as the barrage lifted to the support trenches. They were thus able to catch the enemy still in his dug-outs, four of which they bombed. In two of them were small parties of the enemy who offered resistance but were soon quietened by bombs and rifle fire. Two Germans were captured and passed back to the moppers-up as prisoners, but, attempting later to escape, they were "dealt with". One prisoner was, however, sent back alive by the right party, together with five rifles. The prisoner provided a most valuable identification, as it transpired that a Jäger division, hitherto in the Ypres area, had taken over the line only that night at 10 p.m.

The torpedo detachment of the left party saw a listening post of two men in front of the wire, but left them to be made prisoners by the bombers. There was trouble with these prisoners too, and only one could be sent back to the British lines, the other having to

be "dealt with" while trying to break away. The bombers found a gap in the enemy wire, jumped into the German trench and worked along to the left. They came to a dug-out under construction, with only one shaft, at the bottom of which was a group of eight men. As they refused to come up and opened fire, the corporal in command of the bombing squad fired a few shots which proved ineffectual; and he therefore ordered Mills and phosphorus bombs to be thrown down on the scale of one for each man. No further trouble was experienced in that quarter. This party brought back a kind of body-shield as its booty, and claimed to have killed about twenty of the enemy.

Second-Lieutenant F. J. Butler was awarded the Military Cross for his gallantry and good leadership; and Military Medals were awarded to Corporal P. Slamon, Lance-Corporal W. Grundy and Privates S. Price and J. Govier. The only casualty was one man wounded.

17TH BN. The 17th Battalion supported this raid by sending out a patrol of 2 officers and 25 men, under cover of a light artillery barrage, to bomb Hawk Trench, near Ossus and about six hundred yards north of the 20th Battalion's raid. A number of casualties were inflicted at a cost to the patrol of four men wounded.

CHAPTER XII

1917 (contd.).—THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI

"YPRES, 1917," "PILCKEM," "LANGEMARCK," "MENIN ROAD," "BROODSEINDE," "POLYGON WOOD," "POELCAPPELLE," "PASSCHENDAELE," "CAMBRAI, 1917"

(Maps 3, 4 & 9)

1st, 2nd, 1st 5th, 2nd 5th, 3rd 5th, 1st 6th, 2nd 6th, 1st 7th, 2nd 7th, 1st 8th, 2nd 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Battalions

IT was said of the Battle of the Marne at the beginning of Chapter III that few battles in history had given rise to such furious controversy as the events known by that name. The Third Battle of Ypres, popularly referred to as "Passchendaele" from the final and most painful stage of it, is one of those few. More bitterness has been expended between soldiers and civilians and between soldiers themselves in the discussion of it than was ever shown between the British and the Germans in the fighting of it. The business of a regimental historian is to produce narrative and not controversy ; and the latter will be avoided in this chapter as far as possible. But this is not to say that unpleasant facts will be suppressed or that conditions will be described as they were believed or hoped by some to be instead of as they were in fact.

Put very briefly, the objects of the Third Battle of Ypres were to maintain the pressure on the Germans which had begun on the Somme in July, 1916, and had been continued at Arras and on the French front in the spring of 1917, so as to use up their manpower ; and to seize the Passchendaele ridge as a preliminary to an advance through Roulers in order to join hands with an operation along the Belgian coast from Nieuport and Ostend designed to sweep the enemy from that area and to deprive him of his submarine bases in it. The Passchendaele ridge, though the highest ground in this part of Belgium, is no more than about one hundred and sixty feet above sea-level. The intervening terrain between the British line and the ridge was for the most part at sea-level, with a few small spurs rarely rising more than seventy feet above it. Originally reclaimed from the sea and with a bog a short distance below the surface, it was kept fit for agriculture by an elaborate system of dykes and drains, which farmers were compelled to keep clear under pain of heavy fines. The district has a bad record for rain from the middle of August onwards.

The Germans had profited by their experience on the Somme and had adopted new defensive tactics. Their forward positions

were lightly held and the main resistance centred round concrete strong points, known to the British Army as "pill-boxes," which contained machine guns. Riflemen and light machine guns were to make use of shell-holes between these miniature fortresses in order to delay the progress of an attack, reserves being kept in hand to deliver immediate counter-attacks against troops which had penetrated the forward positions. The bulk of the artillery was placed farther back than formerly, so as to be less vulnerable to counter-battery bombardment but well placed to support the counter-attacks. On 12th July, 1917, the Germans for the first time used mustard gas, which caused considerable casualties.

The opening of the offensive was finally fixed for 31st July, 1917, and was preceded by an intense bombardment lasting for ten days and using four and a quarter million shells of a total value of £22,000,000.' The weather broke on 25th July.

The Opening of the Battle: Lieutenant-Colonel B. Best-Dunkley's Victoria Cross

"PILCKEM"

2nd/5th and 11th Battalions

2ND/5TH BN.

The Regiment was represented on the opening day of the great offensive by one battalion only, the 2nd/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel B. Best-Dunkley) in the 164th Infantry Brigade of the 55th Division. It had been in the Ypres sector since October, 1916, and had, as has been told, done its share of raids and patrolling. It had, however, enjoyed a spell of rest and training in June and returned to Ypres at the beginning of July. While in reserve it had its first taste of the new mustard gas on the 12th, from which it lost 3 officers and 114 other ranks. On 29th July it moved to Café Belge near the Vlamertinghe–Ypres road and at about 8.30 p.m. the following night moved to its assembly positions in trenches known as "Congreve Walk" and "Liverpool Trench" close to Wieltje, arriving without loss at 1.30 a.m. Zero was at 3.50 a.m., when the other two brigades were to advance abreast and capture the "Blue Line" (about seven hundred and fifty yards from the original line) and the "Black Line" (about a mile farther on and running roughly south-east from St. Julien). At 10 10 a.m. the 164th Brigade was to pass through the leading brigades and capture part of the "Green Line," the German third line system of defence, roughly a mile beyond the "Black Line." The initial attack went well and by 9 a.m. the whole of this objective had been taken with the important exceptions of Spree Farm and Wine House, which lay to the south-east of St. Julien. In the meanwhile, the 2nd/5th Battalion had climbed out of its assembly trenches at 8 a.m. and formed up in front of them in artillery formation on a two-company front, "C" (Captain L. R. Mordecai) and "D" (Captain J. R. Bodington) Companies in front with "A" (Captain W. L. Briggs) and "B" (Second-Lieutenant T. Dickinson,

M.C.) in support. At 8.30 a.m. the advance began at the rate of a hundred yards in four minutes. Many German prisoners were met, but progress was otherwise without incident until the Hanebeek stream was reached, when the battalion came under scattered rifle and machine-gun fire, though there was very little shelling. But on reaching a point between two and three hundred yards short of the "Black Line," the battalion met with very heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from many directions, chiefly from strong points at Wine House, Spree Farm, Pond Farm and Hindu Cot. Companies at once shook out into extended order, but the fire inflicted so many casualties and caused so much confusion that correct formations were never regained throughout the action. Nevertheless, the commanders of the leading troops took prompt steps to deal with Wine House, Spree Farm and other parts of the "Black Line" which were giving trouble. When all the officers of "C" Company had been knocked out, Lieutenant-Colonel Best-Dunkley himself dashed forward, took command of its leading wave and personally led them on through intense machine-gun fire. After stiff fighting, in which much gallant leadership was displayed by commanders of all ranks, the "Black Line" was eventually taken in its entirety and the battalion could begin its proper attack. It had by now lost half its strength and was in a very disorganized state. But it was imperative not to lose the creeping barrage, particularly since this was not thick enough to prevent German machine guns from firing through it and the tanks allotted to the operation had been unable to help owing to the bad condition of the ground caused by rain and the bombardment. (This on the first day of the battle!) The advance to the "Green Line" was therefore begun without delay and, after some sharp fights to eject Germans from strong points, the objective was reached with a few further casualties at about noon. A carrier pigeon released at Wurst Farm at 1.45 p.m. with this information reached divisional headquarters at 11.45 a.m. next day. Consolidation was put in hand and outposts were pushed forward to cover it. At this stage, Second-Lieutenant J. Agnew, who had been shot through the knee during the earlier part of the attack but had continued to lead his platoon to its objective, was again wounded and had to go back. He was wounded a third time, but although his wounds were severe he refused to take a stretcher, in order that more serious cases might be dealt with. Second-Lieutenant T. Dickinson, M.C., who had frequently (as has been related) distinguished himself in patrol work in the earlier part of the year, was wounded in the arm, but carried on till he reached the objective, when he was shot through the head.

It was a very attenuated body which had reached the battalion's final objective. On the left, Bodington's "D" Company reached Wurst Farm, just beyond the "Green Line," with ten men, of whom eight soon became casualties. The battalion had been in possession of its objective for less than an hour when the first German counter attack was delivered, from a north-easterly direction and across the

front of the division on the left. As the latter had not been able to make as much progress as the 55th Division and as the left of the German attack was directed on Wurst Farm, there was a grave risk of the survivors of the 2nd 5th being cut off. A withdrawal was therefore ordered to Winnipeg Farm, about seven hundred yards in rear, where an attempt was made to form a defensive flank. When this proved to be impossible, a position was occupied on Jew Hill, to the east of St. Julien, by about 2.15 p.m. In the meanwhile, German artillery fire had become more intense ; and, under cover of this and of machine-gun fire, counter-attacks were delivered by several battalions from both flanks, preceded by four aircraft which flew low over the advance positions, firing lights and machine guns. Immediate steps were taken to prepare the "Black Line" for defence while a further withdrawal to it took place, covered by small parties using every round of ammunition they could find and even taking it from derelict tanks and casualties. A small strong-point near Schuler Farm (about 1,000 yards east of St. Julien) was held by one hundred and thirty men of the 2nd 5th and of the 1st/8th Liverpool Regiment (Liverpool Irish) under Bodington. They beat off repeated attempts to envelop them but finally, after the loss of eighty men, the survivors were compelled to withdraw and fight their way back to the "Black Line," which was reached by ten men. Great gallantry and skill were displayed at this stage by Second-Lieutenant H. Beesley and Corporal E. Lawson, both of whom, though wounded, continued to hold their positions and use their Lewis guns till the last possible moment. The rearguard action of this body enabled the right of the brigade to withdraw safely.

Battalion headquarters were at this time at Spree Farm, in the "Black Line," and received very short warning of the approach of the enemy, who followed close on the heels of the rearguard and tried to penetrate the "Black Line." Lieutenant-Colonel Best-Dunkley collected all available men and personally led them to the attack, which succeeded in driving back the Germans. The artillery came to the rescue about 4.30 p.m. with a heavy barrage which effectually prevented the enemy from obtaining a footing in the "Black Line." But at about this time the adjutant, Lieutenant R. Andrews, was killed, and shortly after the Commanding Officer was wounded. At that time also rain came down in torrents and continued ; shell holes filled with water ; mud became slime ; the conditions were completely discouraging. As there was then no officer known to be alive or unwounded, the Orderly Room Serjeant, Serjeant F. Haworth, took command of the survivors and organized a defensive position, helping with their fire to deal with attempted German attacks. He brought the remnants of the battalion out of the line at about 9 a.m. the following day, 1st August.

Of the 19 combatant officers who went into action, 3 had been killed, 2 so severely wounded that they later died of their wounds, 11 wounded and 2 missing, a total of 18 casualties. Out of 593 other ranks, 473 were casualties.

Minden Day was spent in great discomfort in a position appropriately called Bilge Trench where, in spite of heavy rain, the survivors wore roses on their helmets. On 2nd August they marched back to the transport lines.

A message was received from Major-General H. S. Jeudwine, the Divisional Commander: "Well done, 164. I am very proud of what you did today. It was a fine performance and no fault of yours you could not stay." On his way to hospital, Colonel Best-Dunkley sent a message to General Jeudwine saying he hoped he was not disappointed. The General promptly sent a note to him in which he said:—

"Disappointed?—I should think not, indeed. I am more proud of having you and your Battalion under my command than anything that has ever happened to me.

"It was a magnificent fight, and your officers and men behaved splendidly, fighting with their heads as well as with the most superb pluck and determination.

"The 31st July should for all time be remembered by your Battalion and Regiment and observed with more reverence even than Minden Day. It was no garden of roses that you fought in. . . ."

Lieutenant-Colonel Bertram Best-Dunkley died of his wounds on 7th August and was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, the second (but not the last) to be won by this Second-Line Territorial battalion. Other decorations awarded were the Military Cross to Captain J. R. Bodington, Lieutenant J. Agnew, Second-Lieutenant P. C. Humfrey (the Transport Officer, who led one hundred pack mules loaded with bombs and ammunition through heavy fire in order to replenish the battalion's stock at a critical moment), Second-Lieutenant H. Beesley and the Reverend R. E. G. Newman, who had exposed himself fearlessly in his efforts to cheer the troops and minister to the wounded; the Distinguished Conduct Medal to the Orderly Room Serjeant, Serjeant F. Haworth, and to Lance-Corporal E. Lawson; and Military Medals to Serjeants R. C. Baldwin and F. Hudson, Lance-Serjeant A. Olive, Corporal E. Fox, Lance-Corporal J. Turner and Privates A. Baron, C. Daynes, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Rothwell, W. Rouse and R. Turner.

The 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. C. de R. Martin, M.C.) also qualified for the battle honour "Pilckem," given for the action which began on 31st July, by being in reserve at Ypres. 11TH BN.

The Attack on Westhoek Ridge

11th Battalion

It was, however, soon to take a more active part in the operations. On the evening of 5th August it moved from Ypres and took over a sector of the line on the ridge to the north of Westhoek and close to the Ypres–Roulers railway. The march was delayed by heavy enemy shelling which caused the death of the twenty-year-old adjutant, Captain W. I. Edwards, who had won the Military Cross at the 11TH BN.

capture of Crosbie Craters in May, 1916. The line which the battalion took over was not a connected trench-system, but a series of posts which had been established by the 8th Division on 31st July, when most of the northern end of the Westhoek Ridge had been captured but not the southern. The German positions consisted of a series of isolated machine-gun emplacements built of concrete and partly linked by lengths of trenches. Behind these was a more or less continuous line of trenches which were held, while there were a number of machine guns in shell holes. Advantage was taken by the 11th Battalion of the sketchy nature of the forward German dispositions to carry out active patrolling on the next few nights and to advance the British line considerably, at the same time inflicting loss on the enemy. On the first night, some ruins near the left of the battalion's sector were occupied by "D" Company and a Lewis-gun post was established there, two prisoners being captured; while "A" Company sent patrols to a group of houses opposite the right of the battalion and established a post in them. "D" Company's post had to retire the next night owing to some shells in a British barrage falling short, but a patrol from the same company under Second-Lieutenant H. P. Grenier established a post consisting of a rifle section, a machine-gun section and a Lewis-gun section in a deserted gun-pit and a house even farther forward later the same night. On the night of 8th/9th this post was bombed by a German, who was shot. The main line of posts on the whole battalion front was advanced fifty yards and dug-in in shell holes. This process was repeated the following night.

The result was that, when an attack was ordered, originally for the 9th and finally for the 10th, to complete the capture of Westhoek Ridge, the battalion might almost be said, in the words of a well-known advertisement, to have won the battle the night before it happened. Indeed, "A" and "B" Companies' outposts had to be withdrawn fifty yards so as to be clear of the barrage. The attack was launched at 4.35 a.m., and only on the extreme left was the battalion required to advance any substantial distance beyond the line it had already reached by its own unaided efforts. The enemy's barrage came down quickly, but mostly in vain as it fell behind the battalion. The first success was scored by No. 2 Platoon of "A" Company under Second-Lieutenant G. MacL. Carruthers, which seized some houses opposite the extreme right of the battalion's line by 5 a.m. One house contained a machine gun and 14 Germans, the other a machine gun and 38 Germans. After the latter had surrendered, the Lewis-gun team of the platoon went forward to seize their machine gun. A scuffle occurred amongst the prisoners. One of them must either have thrown a bomb or pulled a wire attached to one: the result was that the Lewis-gun team and the German machine gun were blown up. The nearest men of the platoon then set on the Germans and killed those concerned, who were trying to take advantage of the confusion to escape. The captures in the other house were sent back to battalion headquarters without any trouble.

Consolidation of the line gained was pushed on rapidly, though it was greatly hampered by enemy snipers and by artillery fire which was probably directed from captive balloons so placed that they had an excellent view of the ridge. From 9 a.m. to noon the enemy's shelling was fairly heavy, but there was a period of quiet from then until 2 p.m. At 3.45 p.m. the Germans put down an intense bombardment, directed by aerial observation, on the line held by "A" and "C" Companies, which suffered severely. Under cover of this, enemy snipers established themselves along a bank on the northern side of the railway and kept the left of the line under constant rifle fire which caused several casualties. Between 6 and 7 p.m. the Germans sent some scouts and two platoons forward to attack the post, which had been held since the night of 7th/8th August by Grenier and his party. The attackers were all killed at less than a hundred yards' range. Corporal F. Robinson contributed much to this success: he took his section to a hedge from which he was able to bring enfilade fire with rifles and rifle-grenades on the enemy and also to deal with a second attack on his other flank. At about 7.15 p.m. Grenier reported that he could see about a battalion of Germans massing in a wood about half a mile in front of the battalion's line. The "S O S" signal was sent up, but was not answered till 8.25 p.m. after it had been repeated four times. The British barrage then opened and caught the Germans as they advanced; they also suffered severely from enfilade Lewis-gun and machine-gun fire directed on them by Grenier's party, the Lewis gun firing nine drums and the machine gun four belts, while the rifle section fired twenty rounds a man and thirteen rifle grenades. About thirty men succeeded in passing through the shells and bullets and continued to advance. They came opposite part of "C" Company, under Lieutenant G. A. Keir, who held his fire till they were within four hundred yards and then mowed them down with the fire of a Lewis gun and fifteen rifles. Grenier's post was even now not to be left in peace. During the night several small parties tried to attack it: thirty-five Germans were killed and a number taken prisoner. After another day of sniping and intermittent shelling, the battalion was relieved on the night of 11th/12th August. Its casualties had been 4 officers wounded, 30 other ranks killed, 42 wounded, and 8 missing, who were known not to have been taken prisoner; these losses were the lowest in the brigade. The gallantry and initiative shown by Second-Lieutenant H. P. Grenier were rewarded with the Military Cross; Corporal F. Robinson received the Distinguished Conduct Medal; and Company Serjeant-Major W. Young, Serjeant H. Smith, Corporal J. Joll, Lance-Corporal F. Trotter, and Privates W. Boyd, R. J. Hardwick, H. Harrop, W. T. Hart, E. Haworth, J. Hooson, T. Hopwood and H. Orr were granted Military Medals.

The Crossing of the Steenbeck near Langemarck

1st Battalion

1st Bn On 9th August the 1st Battalion (Major T. Slingsby, M.C.) relieved the 2nd Royal Fusiliers in the line on the south-west side of the Steenbeck stream about a mile west of Langemarck, and officers reconnoitred the crossings over the stream the same night. They found that, owing to the rain, the Steenbeck had by now become a serious military obstacle in many places. Since it was necessary that a firm footing should be obtained on the far bank before further operations on a large scale could be undertaken in this direction, orders were issued for posts to be established about one hundred yards beyond the river on the morning of 11th August. The task was entrusted to three platoons of the 1st Battalion and a body of equal strength from another battalion, the former finding two posts from "C" Company on the right and four from "B" Company on the left. Each post was to consist of two sections. The operation was preceded by a barrage; and zero was at 4.15 a.m. on the 11th. Shortly before that time the various parties moved forward and crossed the river, establishing the posts in the areas indicated without loss under cover of the barrage, though "C" Company's right post, near the Ypres-Staden railway, was later driven back by bombs to the bridge carrying the rails over the river. The battalion on the left was met by such heavy machine-gun fire from Passerelle Farm, close to Wejdendrift, that it was unable to establish its post there. "B" Company's two left parties, under Second-Lieutenant H. Latham, were therefore compelled to form a defensive flank. Latham moved constantly backwards and forwards under heavy shelling and rifle fire, supervising the dispositions; and at one stage he led a section across the open in order to fill a gap which had occurred. Second-Lieutenant T. A. Harrop was wounded during the morning, but he refused to leave his post and continued to superintend its consolidation until the battalion was relieved. During the night 11th/12th, "A" Company carried up trench stores to the posts and was to have come back for rations. But it was unable to do so before daybreak owing to hostile shelling and rifle fire, and consequently had to stay in the forward positions till the following night, having only its iron rations to eat on the 12th. At 4.20 a.m. on this day the battalion on the left attacked and captured Passerelle Farm. The left of "B" Company was then able to move forward to its proper place and the complete new line was consolidated during the day, the battalion being relieved at night, while advantage was being taken of its success to establish twelve double wooden bridges over the stream in readiness for the forthcoming operations. Second-Lieutenants H. Latham and T. A. Harrop received the Military Cross for their work during this operation. The casualties had been light—8 men killed, 1 officer and 48 men wounded, and 3 men missing. The difficulties of campaigning in a foreign country are shown by the fact that, in a report by the officer commanding "C"

Company in which he thanked the 497th (Kent) Field Company, Royal Engineers, for their help in consolidation, the Steenbeck appears under the name "Steambank"!

Behind the Line

It is remarkable how Minden Day was almost invariably observed by battalions of the Regiment throughout the war. If duty in the line prevented celebrations on 1st August itself, they were usually postponed till circumstances were more favourable. In 1917 the 1st and 2nd Battalions were able to keep the proper day and did so thoroughly enough for the fact to be recorded in the brigade war diaries. The 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions, however, had to hold their parades at various dates between the 8th and 16th August, but they were none the less joyous for that.

1ST AND 2ND BNS.

17TH, 18TH AND 20TH BNS.

A curious incident happened to the 2nd 5th Battalion (Major G. S. Brighten) at about this time. Serjeant Petrie and Lance-Corporal Thorpe of "B" Company were walking one night along a road near their billets at Le Poirier, about eighteen miles from Boulogne-sur-Mer, when they were approached by three men, one of whom said in very broken English "What ees the name of thees place, plees?" Petrie's suspicions were aroused, and he and Thorpe promptly arrested the men, who turned out to be Serjeant-Major Hellengs of the 77th German Infantry Regiment and Corporals Engel and Grethe of the Prussian Guard. They had escaped from a prisoners-of-war camp at Marquise, near Calais, four days before and were trying to make their way back to Germany. They were brought to the battalion guard-room and given some food, which they badly needed. It was also obvious that they had lacked all means of attending to their toilet; and the adjutant, whose office was separated from the guard-room by a thin wall, heard one of the guard say to the Germans, "Chatty? Compris 'chatty'?"

2ND/5TH BN.

The Battle of Langemarck, 16th to 18th August 1917

"LANGEMARCK"

9th Battalion

The second phase of the Third Battle of Ypres opened on 16th August and has been given the name of the Battle of Langemarck as most progress was made near that village. The Regiment was represented in it by the 9th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel V. B. Thurston, Dorsetshire Regiment) which, after spending a month in careful training in attack and semi-open warfare about twenty miles from Boulogne, moved to the Ypres area at the end of July. There it practised forming up on a tape both by day and by night and rehearsed the operation which it was to carry out on 16th August. The position from which the attack was to start was to run along the south-western bank of the Steenbeck stream about 1,300 yards due south of Langemarck, since attempts by other divisions to

9TH BN.

establish a "jumping-off" line on the far bank, as had been done by the 1st Battalion, had not proved successful. Bridges were in existence, however, and an officer led tapes forward to them from the area occupied by the battalion. The attack took place in two stages. In the first the 8th Northumberland Fusiliers and 5th Dorsetshire Regiment, starting at 4.45 a.m., were to capture a line slightly beyond the Zonnebeke–Langemarck road. The 9th Lancashire Fusiliers, with the 11th Manchester Regiment on their right, were to follow the Dorsetshire, pass through them when they had taken their objective and capture a line running parallel to it and lying about half a mile to the north-east of it. The left of the final objective rested on a subsidiary road connecting Poelcappelle with Langemarck at a spot called "White House," 1,000 yards east of the latter place. The first stage of the attack was carried through according to plan and by 7.20 a.m. the battalion had passed through the Dorsetshire and formed up behind the barrage which was to lead it to its objective at 7.30 a.m. "W" (Captain E. M. Dawson) and "Z" (Captain E. E. W. Granger) Companies formed the first wave, with "X" and "Y" as the second. On the left the battalion's attack was completely successful. Indeed, the advance was so rapid that Second-Lieutenant H. H. Goss outstripped the barrage, which had become thin during this phase, and arrived at the White House before the time laid down in the programme, only to be wounded and shelled out by the supporting artillery when its fire caught him up. The 11th Manchester Regiment, however, had been held up early in their attack owing to the division on their right having been unable to make progress. In consequence, "Z" and "X" Companies, after reaching a point about four hundred yards from their objective at the cost of considerable casualties, found their right flank exposed to heavy enfilade fire. Granger was shot through the neck and all the officers of "X" Company had by now been wounded. Serjeant A. Hodkinson assumed command of it and had a most difficult task as he received a series of contradictory orders, purporting to come from the Commanding Officer, which twice caused him first to withdraw his men to the line held by the Dorsetshire and then to advance again to his original position, at the cost of further casualties. He repeatedly tried to establish touch with the 11th Manchester, but it was a long time before he was able to do so. Touch had also been lost with "Y" and "Z" Companies on the left. Here, too, a company commander had become a casualty, Dawson being wounded after reaching the objective. Lieutenant J. Hayes, M.C., then took over the command of "W" Company as well as of "Y" and set to work to establish contact on his two flanks. To the right, he first sent a bombing party down a trench in the hope of reaching "Z" and "X" Companies: it never came back. Two further patrols sent in the same direction also failed to return. A third, however, located the enemy in a trench in which Hayes established a block to prevent any interference from that quarter. To the left, he sent Second-Lieutenant A. W. Inglis with orders to bend back the line and gain

touch with the neighbouring brigade. Inglis succeeded in doing so and did very useful work in consolidating the position so that the battalion's left flank was secure.

The rest of the day was comparatively quiet. Although preparations for a counter-attack were observed several times, no assault materialized and the chief trouble experienced by the battalion came from snipers located in Rat House and a wood to the east of it. Rat House lay in a re-entrant of the battalion's line about five hundred yards south-west of White House. Orders were therefore issued for the battalion's posts to be advanced to include Rat House and the wood and for the line to be straightened. This operation was successfully carried out on 17th August by Hayes, who had remained at duty in spite of a wound in the knee received the previous day. Eight German snipers were found in shell holes which they had improved so as to use as fire-positions. They were disposed of and the line was carried forward at least two hundred yards. White House itself had had to be evacuated during the 17th, as fire was opened on it by the British heavy artillery; but it was reoccupied later without opposition.

The battalion was relieved that night without incident and marched back to Siege Camp near Elverdinghe. Lieutenant J. Hayes was awarded a bar to his Military Cross and Second-Lieutenant A. W. Inglis received the Military Cross. Serjeant A. Hodkinson was awarded the Military Medal. The battalion's casualties were 1 officer and 33 other ranks killed, 9 officers and 181 other ranks wounded and 24 other ranks missing.

Two Side-Shows

The two South-East Lancashire battalions carried out raids on 21st August, 1917, near the southern end of the British line with the object of distracting attention from troop movements which were taking place close behind the line and of damaging the enemy's trenches.

17TH BN.

The operation conducted by the 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. F. Crook, D.S.O.) could more suitably be described as a minor attack, since all four companies and battalion headquarters were employed in it. The first objective was the trench running south from Canal Wood, about a mile south-south-west of Honnecourt; the second was two craters and a bank a short distance beyond the first. The 23rd Manchester Regiment were carrying out a similar raid on the right. At his inspection of the 17th Battalion on their Minden Day parade on 8th August, Brigadier-General J. W. Sandilands, commanding the 104th Infantry Brigade, had suggested that the traditional Minden roses should be worn during this action; those taking part in it accordingly wore red and white roses on their steel helmets.

From midnight to 3.30 a.m. on 21st August, parties of "Z" Company acted as patrols in No Man's Land, which was nine hundred yards wide at this point, to ensure that the Germans did not

interfere with the preparations. At 3.30 a.m. these parties closed in and became a covering party for the forming-up of the attackers. "W" Company (Captain W. D. Cheshire) on the right and "X" Company (Captain L. Kitchin) on the left formed the first wave; "Y" Company found the flanking and mopping-up parties as the second wave; and battalion headquarters constituted a third wave. The whole formed up in silence by 4.10 a.m. without being discovered by the Germans. The essence of the plan was surprise. For this reason no bombardment was undertaken until at 4.25 a.m.; just as the first light began to appear in the east, a heavy and accurate barrage of high explosive, smoke and machine-gun fire was suddenly put down. Under cover of it, the battalion advanced, and suffered few casualties, as the German counter-barrage was slow in being brought into effect. The leading wave reached the German wire three minutes before the barrage was due to lift from it and lay down in front of it. At 4.34 a.m. the barrage lifted and the advance was resumed, but was immediately held up by wire. This was much thicker than had been expected, consisting as it did of three belts, of which the first two were very strong; and it was all uncut. A sharp fight with bombs and rifles ensued while the attackers were forcing their way through this obstacle. Several casualties occurred and Captain G. MacKereth, M.C., the adjutant, was badly wounded as he was supervising the placing of a "traverser" mat. In spite of the difficulties, the stretcher-bearers succeeded in bringing back to the British lines all who were killed or wounded during the operation, no mean feat when the extent of No Man's Land is remembered.

"W" Company, on the right, was the first to effect an entry into the German front-line trench, thanks largely to Cheshire's coolness and determination. A few of the enemy were found there and they were dealt with. Cheshire then led his men on towards the bank which formed his second objective. Here several prisoners were taken and four dug-outs were bombed and then blown in by means of Stokes mortar shells. At 4.50 a.m. the recall was sounded and the raiders withdrew. Cheshire and Second-Lieutenant P. Forman were the last to leave: they brought back with them the body of Serjeant W. Watts, which they carried back to the British lines.

In the meanwhile, "X" Company had encountered greater difficulty in cutting a path through the German wire and, by the time they had succeeded in penetrating into the German trench, its occupants had taken refuge in Canal Wood. The company had not sufficient time to go on to its second objective before the bugle blew and it had to withdraw.

The battalion's retirement had to be carried out under a heavy German barrage, but few casualties were incurred. Eleven prisoners, of the 16th Bavarian Infantry regiment, were brought back; and many more had actually been taken, but it was found necessary to despatch them during the withdrawal. A large number of dead and wounded Germans were left in their trenches. The battalion's

losses had been light: 2 killed and 2 officers and 35 other ranks wounded. Captain W. D. Cheshire was awarded the Military Cross; and Military Medals were granted to Corporal W. Shepherd and Privates J. Diggle and J. A. Hall. Even in a comparatively small operation such as this, the expenditure of ammunition could be surprisingly heavy: on this occasion the machine guns taking part in the barrage fired a total of 136,750 rounds.

Later the same day the 20th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. Vaughan, D.S.O.) carried out a smaller raid about seven hundred yards farther north at a spot called "Les Tranchées" ("The Trenches"), which curiously was the peace-time name of it. Profiting by the experience of the 17th Battalion, the brigade commander decided to take steps calculated to ensure that the wire was properly cut; and, during the afternoon, 100 rounds were fired on it by 6-in. howitzers with aerial observation. Even so, when the raiding party, consisting of Captain C. C. Cressy, Second-Lieutenants T. A. Clegg, J. Slater and W. D. Campbell, 62 other ranks of "X" Company, 23 other ranks of "W" Company, and two Lewis guns, set out at 11 p.m. under cover of a heavy barrage, they found the German wire still uncut. With the aid of a Bangalore torpedo and "traverser" mats, an entry was eventually effected, though not before some twenty casualties had been caused by a heavy trench-mortar and machine-gun barrage which the Germans opened on the edge of their wire. When the raiders reached the German trench, they found no occupants, the latter having perhaps been driven out by the barrage covering the attack. Following the established custom of leaving some indication of a visit when its intended recipient is absent, the attacking party left in inconspicuous places a number of small mines with delay-action fuzes. Military Medals were awarded to Serjeant C. H. Bellerby, Serjeant J. K. Craig, Private J. Maguire and Private J. E. Quance. 20TH BN.

An Ill-starred Attack

1st/5th, 1st/6th, 1st/7th and 1st/8th Battalions

The First-Line Territorial battalions spent the greater part of the summer opposite the Hindenburg Line near the extreme right of the British line. But towards the end of August, 1917, they moved to the Ypres district, taking their place in the line near Frezenberg. As elsewhere, the forward positions were in reality an outpost line, which in this area was not satisfactory as a base for further operations on a big scale. It was therefore decided that an attack should be launched with a view to obtaining a better line. Several divisions were to take part; and the share allotted to the 125th (Lancashire Fusiliers) Infantry Brigade was the capture of Borry Farm, Beck House and Iberian Farm, which lay to the north-east of Frezenberg and just to the south of the scene of the 2nd/5th Battalion's attack on 31st July. The key to any attack on Iberian Farm was Hill 35, which was three hundred yards to the north of it; but the division

to which it was allotted was unfortunately unable to take it, a failure which gravely prejudiced the whole of the operation.

1st/8th Bn. Information about the enemy's dispositions near Beck House was sadly lacking. But Serjeant H. Finney, of the 1st 8th, took a patrol out in daylight on 4th September and, with a rifle-grenadier and two Lewis-gunners, crept up to within twenty-five yards of the farm, where he remained for half an hour under fire. The enemy, baffled by this daring procedure, sent up alarm signals from all his main positions, thereby disclosing the desired information. Finney withdrew his patrol to a safer distance, where he lay up for another two hours before finally taking it back to the British lines. The following night he again went out and lay up close to the enemy's lines, getting further valuable information about their dispositions.

1st/5th and 1st/6th Bns The attack was ordered for 6th September and was to be carried out in the 125th Brigade, by the 1st/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel P. V. Holberton, Manchester Regiment) and the 1st/6th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel M. F. Hammond-Smith, M.C., Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers). Two companies of the former were to take Borry Farm while one company of the latter attacked Beck House and two companies Iberian Farm. The 1st/7th (Lieutenant-Colonel W. E. Maskell, Devonshire Regiment) was to be in support of the 1st 5th, and 1st/8th (Lieutenant-Colonel O. St. L. Davies, Manchester Regiment) of the 1st/6th. The 1st/8th was also to provide wiring and carrying parties for employment when the objective was captured. The artillery preparation was thorough: on 3rd and again 4th September, Borry Farm was bombarded by 6-inch and 12-inch howitzers and by 15-inch guns. Further shelling took place on the 5th and brought about heavy German retaliation between 9.30 and 10.30 p.m. that night, causing serious interference with the preparations for the attack and considerable casualties to the ration and carrying parties of the 1st/6th, which had relieved the 1st/8th in the line very early on the 5th. On the night of the 5th/6th, the 1st 5th dug an assembly trench which was occupied by "C" and "D" Companies, who were to carry out the attack. At 7.15 a.m. on 6th September a heavy bombardment was opened on the objective, especially at Borry Farm. At 7.30 a.m. the assault was launched.

1st 7th Bn. 1st 8th Bn.

On the right "C" and "D" Companies of the 1st/5th, with "A" and "B" in support, moved forward under cover of a creeping barrage only to be met at once by heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from Vampire Farm, close to the Ypres–Zonnebeke road south-east of Borry Farm, and from some dug-outs south of the latter. After going one hundred and fifty yards, the attack could make no further progress in face of this withering fire. To the left, the company of the 1st 6th which was detailed for the capture of Beck House escaped the German machine-gun and rifle fire at first, perhaps because their advance was slightly uphill and the troops were to some extent hidden from the defenders. It succeeded in gaining possession of its objective; and of the garrison of 2 officers and 47 men, 1 officer and 30 men were taken prisoner, the rest being killed or

severely wounded. Still farther to the left, the two companies of 1st/6th whose objective was Iberian Farm had no sooner begun their advance than they came under very heavy machine-gun fire from some gun-pits on the southern slopes of Hill 35 and from an emplacement in front of a camouflaged dug-out close to Iberian Farm. They also received from Beck House the fire which should by rights have been directed against the company attacking it. What happened has never been fully established. Air reports indicated that some of the attackers succeeded in reaching trenches north and south of Iberian; but the majority became casualties before they got so far. Most of the survivors, reorganized and led forward by Second-Lieutenant K. E. Candy, who had come over from the right when he realized the severity of the losses in officers, advanced to within a hundred yards or less of the farm: part of the left company established itself in a hollow about a hundred yards west of it; while what was left of the right company made a little more progress but was in no position to push home an attack in the face of the intense machine-gun fire.

It was now the turn of the Germans. At about 10.45 a.m. some three companies of them delivered a counter-attack. It was reported that those taking part in it wore no equipment and carried no rifles and they appear to have relied on bombs. They came under heavy artillery fire and also under rifle fire all along the line. But though they suffered heavy casualties, they succeeded in coming to close quarters. They retook Beck House and killed or captured the whole of its occupants with the exception of two wounded men who managed to escape. As Beck House was entirely out of sight of the original front line, there was no communication with it except by runner, with the result that battalion headquarters had received no word from there after sending up reinforcements at 9.30 a.m. and was unaware of its loss till the two survivors arrived at 6 p.m.

Nor were the troops opposite Iberian more fortunate. For during the afternoon the machine-gun fire from Hill 35, Iberian itself and the lost Beck House became so intense that eventually it compelled the survivors of the left companies of 1st 6th to withdraw to their original front line. Candy, although wounded early in the day, remained with his troops till they were relieved after dark. Amongst others of the 1st/6th who earned distinction on this day were Serjeant G. Ward, who went out six times under heavy enemy fire to bring in wounded men before he was seriously wounded himself, and Lance-Corporal E. Taylor, who helped to break up an enemy attack by rushing his Lewis gun into a shell hole and sticking to it after the rest of his team had been knocked out, until ordered to withdraw.

The misfortunes which had befallen the 1st 6th had their effect on the situation of the 1st 5th. The withdrawal of all troops on its left had resulted in this flank being in the air. When therefore the enemy launched a counter-attack at about 7.30 p.m., the left flank was threatened with envelopment and, in spite of the heavy losses inflicted on the Germans by artillery, machine-gun and rifle fire, had

no alternative but to fall back. The right of the line, however, was able to cling to a position about three hundred and fifty yards short of its objective, which it consolidated. Captain A. B. Sackett displayed great gallantry and refused to leave the line, although he was wounded in three places. A further counter-attack at 11.10 p.m. was broken up by artillery fire.

The 1st/7th and 1st 8th Battalions were not called upon to take part in the fighting, but both suffered casualties, particularly a carrying party of the former which accompanied the 1st/5th.

The net result of the day's fighting had been the gain of a shallow wedge of ground, one hundred and fifty yards in depth on the right and tapering down till it joined the original line in the centre. The casualties had been very heavy. The 1st/5th lost 7 officers and nearly 500 men and the 1st/6th one and a half complete companies in addition to heavy casualties in the rest of the battalion. The decorations awarded included :—

Military Cross

Captain A. B. Sackett, 1st/5th. Captain W. M. Tickler, 1st/5th.
Second-Lieutenant K. E. Candy, 1st/6th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Serjeant H. Finney, 1st/8th.

Military Medal

Serjeant G. Ward, 1st/6th. Corporal S. W. Tomney, 1st/5th.
Lance-Corporal J. McMurdo, 1st/5th. Lance-Corporal W. Squires, 1st/5th.
Lance-Corporal E. Taylor, 1st/6th. Private A. Benedicty, 1st/7th.
Private E. Cottam, 1st/5th. Private J. Dolan, 1st/5th.
Private T. Feerick, 1st/5th. Private H. Hall, 1st/5th.
Private J. E. Holt, 1st/5th. Private R. Mitchell, 1st/6th.
Private J. Schofield, 1st/6th. Private W. Wallace, 1st/5th.
Private J. W. Wilde, 1st/7th.

The "Green Line" Once More

"MENIN ROAD"

2nd/5th Battalion

The third phase of the Third Battle of Ypres opened on 20th September, 1917, and achieved rather more success than the attack of 16th August. The 55th Division was once more set the task of capturing the "Green Line," to the east of St. Julien, which it had taken but had been unable to hold on 31st July. While it had been out of the line, making good its losses and training its reinforcements, two other divisions had tried in vain to advance from the "Black Line" which had been the final limit of its gains on that day. And although slight progress had been made at certain points, the line from which the division was to start its attack on 20th September was that which it had handed over six weeks earlier.

2ND/5TH BN.

The 2nd 5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten) had turned that period to good use and entrained for Ypres on 14th September in excellent spirits. Its destination was a bivouac camp, at which it detrained, close to Goldfish Chateau, slightly over a mile

west of Ypres. As the railway and the road leading from Ypres to Poperinghe crossed each other at this point, the camp came in for a good deal of attention from German aircraft and artillery. During the three days which the battalion spent here, the officers visited a model of the scene of the forthcoming attack which had been made at divisional headquarters, and also went up to Call Farm, close to Wieltje, to take a distant view of the ground itself across the valley of the Hanebeek. Its nature was thus described in a letter written by an officer of the battalion :—

"Imagine a slightly undulating country with the foreground and the middle distance wearing the brown and rough appearance of ploughed land with occasional clumps of half-truncated and blasted trees, and in the distant background, as yet untouched by successions of hurricane bombardments, villages apparently intact and quantities of green trees. In the middle distance are several derelict tanks, and through one's glasses one sees little parties of men winding their way forward or back over ground where they could apparently get no cover but where in reality, owing to a slight hollow, they were well protected from view. One landmark was a little sort of hut, up against which was propped the tailpiece of a German aeroplane with its yellow background and black cross : this hut was known as Hindu Cot. It is extraordinarily difficult to spot what one is looking for on this ground—for everything within a mile and a half or more in front of you is simply brown, churned-up earth. . . ."

On the evening of 17th September the battalion moved up to the old German front line near Wieltje. Late that night a dug-out near battalion headquarters caught fire. It contained a quantity of ammunition, smoke candles and similar combustible matter. But the risk of enemy artillery fire being drawn to the blaze was lessened by the smoke generously produced by the candles. The chaplain, the Reverend R. E. G. Newman, M.C., helped to get all the occupants out and then, with the aid of Private G. Owen, a signaller, extinguished the fire. Battalion headquarters and "C" Company advanced to Capricorn Keep, five hundred yards behind the front line, on the following evening, the company going on to Pond Farm Galleries and taking over part of the line. During the night a German serjeant-major deserted and gave himself up to the company. The battalion had captured an escaped German serjeant-major in the back area a few weeks before, as has been mentioned several pages previously. When it captured another serjeant-major at the very beginning of its attack on 20th September, it began to think it was a kind of fly-paper for senior German N.C.Os.! The final preparatory moves were made on the evening of the 19th, when battalion headquarters went forward to Pond Farm Galleries, about one hundred and twenty yards from the then front line and four hundred and fifty yards from the first objective. At 8.30 p.m. "A," "B" and "D" Companies began to march up from the old German front line to their assembly positions, in an ill-defined line of shell holes, which had been marked out with tapes, the flanks of platoons being marked with boards. It was learnt afterwards from a prisoner that the tapes had been seen by the Germans who were consequently fully expecting an attack.

Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten had been made responsible in the brigade's orders for supervising the assembly of a company of another battalion; and when the commanding officer of a third battalion offered to look after the 2nd 5th's three rear companies, the least Colonel Brighten could do was to undertake to help that battalion's forward companies, so that in effect he became responsible for the front line of the whole brigade. After a march rendered very difficult by the mass of shell holes, by the exceptional darkness of the night and by the rain which had now started again and which made the tracks very slippery, the companies reached their assembly positions by 1.30 a.m. The battalion's frontage was three hundred yards. Its objectives were the "Dotted Red Line," roughly the line of Schuler Galleries, 1,500 yards south-east of St. Julien; the "Yellow Line," an arbitrary line lying half-way between the Galleries and the final objective; and the familiar "Green Line" which was the Zonnebeke–Langemarck road. The Galleries were a row of concrete dug-outs, heavily covered with earth, and harbouring a number of machine guns. "C" (Second-Lieutenant J. G. Smerdon) and "D" (Captain R. A. Mudie) Companies were to form the first and second waves and to capture the "Dotted Red Line" and the "Yellow Line"; "A" (Major H. P. Cochrane) and "B" (Captain G. G. A. Kerr) Companies were to be the third and fourth waves, with the task of passing through the previous waves when these had taken their objectives and seizing the "Green Line," beyond which they were to establish a post at Green House.

At 3 a.m. a final conference of company commanders was held, at which watches were synchronized. At 5.30 a.m. the shelling which had gone on slowly but steadily for several days was quickened to a short, hurricane bombardment. And at about 5.40 a.m. the attack began. The morning, like the night its predecessor, was very dark and it was difficult to distinguish any objects. But in spite of the heavy barrage under which the troops went forward, German machine guns opened fire almost at once from Schuler Galleries and from points on the extreme right and left which took the advancing lines in reverse. The enemy's artillery barrage also came down very quickly, catching the rear waves. The result was that, by the time a secure footing had been obtained at Schuler Galleries at 6.37 a.m., the battalion had lost half its strength. The Galleries were not taken without a struggle. Rifle grenades proved very useful in dealing with the machine guns located in them; but close fighting was needed for a considerable time before the position was finally cleared of Germans. Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten sent Second-Lieutenant B. E. Cridland and a few signallers to Schuler Galleries as a forward command-post at 7.15 a.m. Half an hour later the Liverpool Irish, whose chief task was the capture of Schuler Farm, immediately to the left of the Galleries, reported that they were held up and asked for the loan of four Lewis guns, as all their own were out of action. One was sent. The effect of the stopping of the Irish was that the 2nd 5th Battalion's left could make no progress beyond the Galleries.

But on the right, elements pushed on and Cridland saw some men approaching the "Green Line." This was confirmed by a message from Cochrane that Second-Lieutenant A. Stafford was within fifty yards of the Line and was about to advance. Shortly after, Cochrane was killed. By now all but two of the officers who had gone forward with the companies had become casualties, seven having been killed and four wounded: Second-Lieutenant R. M. Barlow, although severely wounded in the first few minutes, had refused to leave his platoon until he had led them to Schuler Galleries and seen their consolidation begin. Three officers were left in the forward area—Cridland at the command-post and Stafford and Second-Lieutenant A. H. G. Griggs with the troops of whom not more than about sixty were now left in organized bodies. The adjutant (Captain J. C. Latter) therefore went forward at 8.45 a.m. to see what could be done. He learnt from Cridland that, though the latter was in touch with some men of "A" Company under Griggs on his right, he was unable to obtain any news of the parties which had pushed on towards the "Green Line." At 11.30 a.m. an order was received from brigade headquarters and issued to Cridland that no further attempt was to be made to reach this objective, but that a defensive position was to be organized on the line reached. A telephone line had by now been run forward to Schuler Galleries, and several times during the day Cridland was able to send back early information of German preparations for a counter-attack which enabled the artillery to break them up. The line was cut more than once by shell fire, but a signaller, Private H. Jones, went out each time and mended it, with complete disregard of his own safety.

At 4 p.m. an attempt to get in touch with any survivors of the leading waves was organized by Griggs. But shortly after, a very heavy German barrage was put down on the Galleries and over a wide area, under cover of which a counter-attack was launched against a neighbouring brigade. Owing to a false alarm, the "S O S" was sent up from the Galleries, which caused the British barrage to come down—some of it on parts of the Galleries—and Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten to collect practically the whole of his headquarters and dash forward with them to the help of what he knew to be an inadequate garrison for the repelling of any attack. Finding that all was comparatively well, he withdrew his party to Pond Farm Galleries, instructing Latter to organize a proper defensive system on the "Dotted Red Line." Griggs had already dug a trench, which he called "Minden Trench," to the right of the Galleries; and Latter proceeded to organize such men as he could find into sentry groups and to place N.C.Os. in command of areas containing several groups.

The night was quiet; and apart from a heavy German bombardment from 6 to 8 p.m., the next day was uneventful. During the night the line of posts was advanced slightly, but the front line was otherwise undisturbed.

The 22nd was quiet apart from German bombardment from

5.30 to 6.30 a.m. and signs of movement opposite Schuler Galleries which were dealt with eventually by the artillery. The 23rd likewise opened with a bombardment from 6 to 7 a.m. and again at 9 a.m., the latter covering a German counter-attack on units to the left. During the afternoon preparations were made for handing over the line. The battalion intelligence officer, Second-Lieutenant J. B. Lupton, spent much time in sorting out, and making lists of, various stores at battalion headquarters, which he placed neatly in appropriate dumps. At 5 p.m. the Germans put down a barrage on the whole area which lasted till 8.30 p.m. and which was described by experienced soldiers as terrific and the worst they had ever experienced. The effect of it on the dumps can be imagined; but a week later a letter was received through the usual channels from the relieving division complaining that they had been left in a very untidy condition! At 9 p.m. the relief began; by 11.30 p.m. all the troops were clear; and shortly after midnight they were taken by light railway from St. Jean to the vicinity of a rest camp near Watou. The battalion had gone into the line with 22 officers and 572 other ranks; it had lost 7 officers and 33 other ranks killed, 8 officers (including the medical officer and chaplain) and 218 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 80 other ranks missing. Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten was awarded the Distinguished Service Order; the Military Cross was given to Captain J. C. Latter, Captain H. Whitaker, R.A.M.C., and to Second-Lieutenants R. M. Barlow, B. E. Cridland and A. H. G. Griggs; while Serjeant J. Donovan, Corporals R. J. Haworth and J. Middleton, Lance-Corporals F. W. Harrison and J. T. Topping, and Privates J. Bracegirdle, H. Jones and G. Owen received the Military Medal.

The 1st Battalion also qualified for the battle honour "Menin Road," as the 29th Division was in reserve and the battalion was at Elverdinghe within the prescribed area.

Side-show

17th and 18th Bns.

By way of farewell to the peaceful southern sector in which they had been stationed so long, before being drawn into the vortex of the fighting at Ypres, the 17th (Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. F. Crook, D.S.O.) and 18th (Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Irvine, C.M.G., D.S.O.) Battalions carried out a raid near Lempire on the night of 24th/25th September, with the object of obtaining identifications and prisoners. During the afternoon of the 24th the artillery fired on the German wire in front of Willow Trench and Knoll Trench. At 10.35 p.m. under cover of a heavy artillery and trench-mortar barrage on the enemy's front-line and support trenches, the raiding parties of the two battalions set out.

Captain F. L. Wainwright led Lieutenant J. A. Wallis and 46 N.C.Os. and men of "Z" Company of the 17th Battalion towards Willow Trench. When he reached the German wire he found that it had been repaired after the afternoon's shelling. He therefore

withdrew his party to a place of cover and superintended the blowing of gaps by means of two Bangalore torpedoes. He then took his party forward once more and entered the trench. Its occupants had been withdrawn and the time limit of half an hour for the raid was reached before any could be found. But a valuable identification was obtained in the shape of a greatcoat belonging to the 184th Infantry Regiment, at a cost of two casualties, Wallis and one man being wounded. Wainwright carried Wallis back under fire from a German machine gun. He was awarded the Military Cross for his gallantry and good leadership on this occasion; Serjeants J. Tomlinson and W. Johnston and Private F. Rowles received the Military Medal.

A short distance to the left, Second-Lieutenant H. F. Ward, with two other officers and fifty other ranks of the 18th Battalion and two sappers, had met with the same difficulty at the wire. The sappers made a way through with two Bangalore torpedoes, and, after crossing a second belt of wire by means of "traverser" mats, the raiders invaded Knoll Trench. Here they divided into two parties and had better luck than Wainwright's party as several Germans were found. A corporal and three men of the 440th Infantry Regiment were taken prisoner and two other men were bayoneted. During their withdrawal the raiders came under considerable machine-gun fire, but only seven men were wounded in the operation, three of them so lightly that they were able to remain at duty. Second-Lieutenant H. F. Ward received the Military Cross.

At the end of this month, the 18th Battalion received drafts of 281 men, most of whom had been transferred from the Inland Water Transport branch of the Royal Engineers and from the Army Service Corps—an indication of the seriousness of the manpower problem and the difficulty of finding reinforcements of the highest physical category for combatant units.

In the Wings

"POLYGON WOOD"

Although they took no part in the fighting, the 1st, 2nd, 9th and 19th Battalions were in the prescribed area during the Battle of Polygon Wood, which took place from 26th September to 3rd October, and thus gained this battle honour for the Regiment.

The Ninth Battalion's Last Action, 4th October, 1917

"BROODSEINDE"

9th Battalion

The next big phase of the Third Battle of Ypres took place on 4th October, 1917, in the shape of a wide attack which made the most progress near Broodseinde, whence it took its name. Towards the extreme left of the frontage of attack, the 9th Battalion (Major J. Milnes) took part in what was destined to be its last fight, though 9TH BN.

it did not know it at the time. After its action near Langemarck on 16th August it had spent the rest of the month in finding working parties in the forward area. September began unluckily, for at 4.30 a.m. on the 4th a German aeroplane, perhaps returning from a raid with some spare bombs and seeing the glow of the fires with which breakfasts were being cooked for an early start, dropped six bombs in the battalion's lines, killed 16 men and wounded 71. The month was devoted to very thorough training in an area behind the line. Detailed rehearsals of the forthcoming operations were performed on a training ground on which the battlefield had been laid out to scale, conspicuous features being labelled with their names. Plans were formed and practised for the assault and capture of all known German strong points in the line of attack. Sand models of the terrain were also made and inspected by all ranks, who became act-perfect in their parts. On 1st October the battalion moved forward to Dirty Bucket Camp, Brandhoek. Next day battalion headquarters, "W" and "X" Companies advanced to the canal bank north of Ypres, "Y" Company going to Murat Shelters near Brielen. During the night of 2nd 3rd October, "W" and "X" Companies relieved the 9th West Yorkshire Regiment and the 6th York and Lancaster Regiment in the line south-west of Poelcappelle, with "Y" Company in support at Maison Bulgare, just east of the Hanebeek stream. Battalion headquarters went to Bulow Farm, south-east of Langemarck, and "Z" Company stepped up to Murat Shelters.

The front line at this time was about five hundred yards farther forward than when the 9th Battalion left it on 17th August. The final objective for the attack on 4th October was a line running south-south-east from Poelcappelle, the 9th Battalion's left boundary being at Gloster Farm, five hundred yards from the outskirts of the village, and its right at Terrier Farm, giving it a frontage of four hundred and fifty yards. Its first objective -the "Dotted Red Line" was a road turning south-east from the St. Julien Poelcappelle road about seven hundred yards from the latter village and the same distance from the starting line.

Late on 2nd October the forming-up lines were marked out with string about one hundred yards east of the Stroombeek stream and the same distance behind the front line, and were reconnoitred by the company commanders, who also looked over the ground of which they already knew the features so well. The following day was quiet, except for frequent shelling of the back areas. Shortly after dusk Second-Lieutenant C. H. Brewer, with Serjeant J. Blackledge and the battalion scouts, replaced the strings at the forming-up places by white tape and marked the boundary between the leading companies in the same way. Patrols were sent out by the forward companies to prevent the enemy observing that anything out of the ordinary was happening near the front line. One such patrol met a German patrol, of which they killed three men and took one prisoner. The plan for the attack was for "X" Company (Lieutenant

J. C. B. Harris) on the right and "W" Company (Lieutenant C. F. Melling, M.C.) on the left to carry out the assault, with "Y" Company (Captain A. Parke) in support and "Z" (Captain A. B. Rowlerson) in reserve. Specific platoons and sections were detailed to capture all known strong points.

"W" and "X" Companies began at 3.15 a.m. to evacuate their front line in order to take their places on the forming-up tapes, leaving only a small covering party in each post which was in turn withdrawn a quarter of an hour before zero. By 4.45 a.m. the whole battalion was in position without incident, except in the case of "Z" Company, one of whose platoons lost a large proportion of its strength through one shell which landed in its midst on the way up from the canal. The troops, once in position, lay hidden in shell holes until zero. At 5.30 a.m. the Germans sent over a light barrage. Most of it fell behind the assembly positions and did no harm, though shortly before zero Parke and Second-Lieutenant T. Harper were wounded, but remained on duty and led their men to the attack. Zero was at 6 a.m., when the creeping barrage opened satisfactorily except for a few shells which fell short. Four trench-mortars did very useful work on various points and dealt successfully with numbers of Germans in shell holes. The answering barrage from the enemy's guns was not slow in coming, both sides of the Stroombeek receiving attention. But the majority of the battalion's casualties were due to machine-gun fire. The medical officer (Captain R. H. Spittal) and the chaplain (Reverend S. F. Clarke) were killed shortly after zero.

The first objective—the "Dotted Red Line"—was successfully captured, but not without some losses. Two company commanders had been wounded, Parke and Melling, the former for the second time that day; and Harper, who had also been wounded, was killed. As Parke came past battalion headquarters on his way to hospital, the Commanding Officer, Major J. Milnes, came out to ask him for information as to the progress of the attack, and was himself badly hit. Nevertheless he insisted on carrying on until the final objective was taken, when he handed over command to the adjutant, Lieutenant G. H. Pemberton.

While the troops waited on the "Dotted Red Line" for the barrage to move forward towards the final objective, the enemy were seen massing near Terrier Farm as if for a counter-attack. But they dispersed as soon as the barrage approached them, and the second stage of the advance was carried out in perfect order and with little opposition, thanks to the help of four tanks, except at Gloster Farm. Here the Germans put up resistance, but when a trench mortar had been sent for and brought into action against them they were soon ejected. Nine machine guns and a considerable number of prisoners were taken during this phase and many German dead were seen on the captured ground.

By about 12 noon the final objective was in British hands. But ten officers, including the commanding officer, the signalling officer and all four company commanders, had become casualties. Brewer,

the intelligence officer, going forward at 11 a.m. to find a place for battalion headquarters near the "Dotted Red Line," disappeared completely and it had to be presumed that he was the victim of a direct hit by a German shell. The task of consolidation was begun at once. "W" and "X" Companies each dug themselves in in a line of shell holes about eighty yards in front of the objective, and gradually linked them up to form posts. In rear of this line, "Y" Company made another line of posts, while "Z" dug yet a third in rear again. Pemberton, now in command, moved his headquarters to within three hundred yards of the front line and was active in personally supervising the work of consolidation. Once again the tanks helped, by bringing up Lewis guns and ammunition to the forward positions. Patrols were sent forward under cover of a protective barrage in order to clear the ground in front of the new posts. They had orders to occupy Beek Houses, about three hundred yards beyond the objective. But though these appeared to be empty when they advanced, they were unable to reach them owing to the barrage; and when the latter lifted, the place was seen to have been reoccupied by the Germans in such strength as to make its seizure by patrols out of the question.

The new line was twice counter-attacked during the day. At 4.30 p.m. the Germans advanced against both its flanks. But thanks to the hard work put in by "W" and "X" Companies, tired though they were, as soon as they had reached their objective, the attackers were driven off. A second attack, delivered against the battalion on the left and the left flank of "W" Company, met with the same fate. The night passed in comparative quiet. Early next morning, Captain J. F. T. Ward-McQuaid, who had just returned from a course at the Senior Officers' School at Aldershot, came up from the transport lines and took over the command from Pemberton who, although a Sandhurst cadet twelve months before, had shown the greatest initiative, gallantry and organizing ability in an emergency. This very able young officer was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. Captain A. Parke received the Military Cross, as did the transport officer, Lieutenant H. Pollitt, who brought the rations forward each night and, on one occasion when the ration party was dispersed by enemy fire, personally superintended the delivery of food to each company. Bars to the Military Medal were awarded to Serjeant J. Blackledge, Serjeant G. F. Stacey and Private F. Radford; while the Medal itself was received by Serjeants J. A. Smithson, J. Sockett and H. Wood, Lance-Serjeant G. Jeffs, Corporal J. Phillingham, and Privates R. Ashworth, T. W. Briggs, J. Feeney, J. Gardiner, W. Hammond, W. Illingworth, F. Liddiard, M. Lyons, H. G. Macklen, T. Morgan, A. Rennison, C. Tandy and W. S. Worthington. The casualties had been 4 officers and 15 other ranks killed, 8 officers and 140 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 53 men missing. Most of the latter proved to have been wounded and evacuated to hospital through the aid posts of other units.

During the night of 5th/6th October the battalion was relieved by

the 5th Dorsetshire Regiment. Pemberton went out under heavy fire to the advanced posts and helped to collect the men and to withdraw them in safety. Few casualties were suffered as the unit made its way to brigade reserve west of the Steenbeek.

The 1st and 19th Battalions also qualified for the battle honour "Broodseinde," the former being in reserve at Elverdinghe, while the latter was employed in prolonging the St. Jean Wieltje road in preparation for operations to be carried out at a later date by the 66th Division, to which the 3rd/5th, 2nd/6th, 2nd/7th and 2nd/8th Battalions belonged. These operations will be described shortly. It may be mentioned that on 6th October, 339 men of high physical category were transferred from the 19th Battalion to those Territorial units and were replaced by men with technical (but little military) experience from the 1st Reserve Battalion, Royal Engineers.

The Ninth of October

"POELCAPPELLE"

1st, 2nd, 3rd 5th, 2nd 6th, 2nd 7th, 2nd 8th and 19th Battalions

The Battle of Poelcappelle on 9th October, 1917, might well be celebrated in the Regiment as one of its major festivals. For the first time in their history the two Regular Battalions fought shoulder to shoulder; in all, six battalions of the Regiment fought this day, while a seventh was working close behind the line, a higher number than took part in any other single attack in the war; and a very high degree of initiative and gallantry was displayed as is proved by the fact that the deeds performed on this occasion won for the Regiment a Victoria Cross, 2 D.S.Os., 2 bars to the Military Cross, 13 Military Crosses, one bar to the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 15 Distinguished Conduct Medals, one bar to the Military Medal and 113 Military Medals.

The Regular Battalions

After taking part in the second phase of the Third Battle of Ypres on 16th August, the 1st Battalion had taken its turn in the line near Langemarck for the rest of the month. Most of September had to be devoted to training at Purbrook Camp, Haringhe, six miles north-west of Poperinghe, with a period spent in work in the forward area under the direction of a tunnelling company. On 21st September the battalion moved to Elverdinghe, where it found that the 2nd Battalion had arrived the day before after a comparatively peaceful summer spent near Arras. The consequence inevitable in the British Army followed on the 25th, when a football match was arranged between the two battalions, with the satisfactory result of a draw at one goal each. 1ST BN. 2ND BN.

On 7th October, apparently as a final preparation for battle, it is recorded in the War Diary of the 1st Battalion that all feet were washed at Elverdinghe Baths. That night the battalion took over a 1ST BN.

sector of the line about eight hundred yards north-east of Langemarck. The line in this area was not straight and had a sharp backward bend near the left of the battalion's portion of it. Orders were issued next day for an attack on 9th October. The first objective, called the "Green Dotted Line," was rather over five hundred yards from the front line but not entirely parallel to it -a source of trouble during the operation. The second objective was named the "Blue Dotted Line" and lay five hundred yards beyond the first, to which it was nearly parallel. The battalion's right and left boundaries on it were marked by Senegal Farm and Tranquille House respectively. On the way to the first objective were a number of German strong points, notably at Olga Houses. The keeping of direction after leaving the "Green Dotted Line" was not made easier by the fact that the main road leading from Poelcappelle to Houthulst Forest ran diagonally across the line of advance and therefore tended to swing the attacking waves to the right. The capture of the first objective was assigned to "A" Company (Captain R. Downes, M.C.) on the right and "B" Company (Lieutenant C. L. Rougier) on the left. "C" and "D" (Second-Lieutenant G. Garnet) Companies were then to pass through and seize and consolidate the "Blue Dotted Line." Special parties were to be detailed to deal with all strong points on the battalion's front. In addition, "A" Company was to detail a liaison post, consisting of a N.C.O. and two men, to maintain touch with the 2nd Battalion at Millers Houses, where the two battalions would join on the first objective. At the end of the 1st Battalion's operation order, the Commanding Officer (Lieutenant-Colonel A. H. S. Hart Synnot, D.S.O., East Surrey Regiment) added the following inspiring paragraph over the signature of his adjutant, Captain G. S. Lockwood :—

"29. THE OCCASION.—It is a great day in the history of the XXth Regiment, when the first and second Battalions advance to the attack side by side."

The night of 8th/9th October was a time of considerable anxiety and discomfort. Much rain had fallen and the ground was very wet, muddy and slippery, though in the early morning a good drying wind made some amends. There was no moon and the night was extremely dark. The laying-out of the tapes on which the companies were to form up for the attack was not an easy task : there was at first insufficient material ; the line was of an awkward shape, as has been mentioned ; and the mud and darkness made work very slow. Nevertheless the tapes were successfully laid by the battalion's intelligence officer, Lieutenant J. E. Cotgrave, and his work was not disturbed by the very heavy shelling to which almost all the ground between Langemarck and the starting line was subjected. But the troubles of this night were not over. When Lieutenant-Colonel Hart Synnot went forward at 2 a.m. to see how the preparations were progressing, he was told by Rougier that two out of his three platoons had gone astray on the way to the tapes and that all

Official Photograph.

Men of Lancashire Fusiliers carrying duc

It is believed that these men be

Face page 240

Crown Copyright Reserved

kboards near Pilckem, 10th October, 1917.

longed to the 10th Battalion.)

efforts to trace them had failed. He therefore put "D" Company on the forming-up line in order that it should replace "B" in the attack on the first objective. Fortunately at about 4.30 a.m. the missing platoons were found and he reverted to his original plan, though this step involved both companies assembling on the tapes. The whole battalion was in position by 5.10 a.m.—a close shave as zero was at 5.20 a.m.

At this hour, just as dawn was breaking, the barrage opened and the attacking waves moved forward. Seven minutes later a somewhat ragged German counter-barrage came down, but it did not cause as much inconvenience as the enemy's machine guns and rifles. These offered considerable opposition from a strong point south of Olga Houses and from another to east of them. Here, Serjeant W. Brain, D.C.M., M.M., who had joined the battalion in Malta in 1910 and served with great gallantry as a stretcher-bearer in Gallipoli and in France, gave further proof of his courage and initiative. When his platoon was held up by machine-gun fire from the first of these "pill-boxes," he rushed forward alone and managed to reach the door at the back of it. He disposed of the garrison by using bombs and his bayonet and enabled his platoon to go forward. They were then held up by the other "pill-box." Once again Brain dashed forward alone and forced the whole garrison of twenty-five Germans to surrender. Other centres of resistance in this area were rushed by Downes, whose action helped to prevent a check in the advance. Unfortunately, during this fighting he was badly wounded in the elbow by a bomb and had to withdraw. Two of his platoon commanders, Second-Lieutenants E. F. Marriott and J. Bird, were also wounded; but N.C.Os. promptly took their place and the command of "A" Company was at once assumed by Lieutenant S. H. Winterbottom, who led it on towards the first objective. Soon he was confronted by Olga Houses, whence a galling machine-gun fire was being directed on the attackers. Realizing that any prolonged delay would cause the troops to lose the barrage, Serjeant J. Lister rushed ahead of his men and found a machine gun firing from a shell hole in front of the strong point. He disregarded it and went on to the "pill-box" itself, where he shouted to the occupants to surrender. Only one man refused and him Lister shot dead, the rest came out, whereupon more Germans, to the number of about a hundred, emerged from shell holes behind and gave themselves up. The effect of Lister's prompt initiative was to enable the advance to continue with a barely perceptible check and the troops to keep up with the barrage, at a moment when serious delay might easily have occurred. If the line had been held up here and the barrage lost, it is very probable that the first objective would not have been reached over a wide area, with incalculable consequences to the operations. Instead, "A" Company was able to establish itself on the "Dotted Green Line" as early as 5.58 a.m. It at once got in touch with "B" Company on its left, and with the 2nd Battalion on its right near Millers Houses.

"B" Company itself in the meanwhile had not had an unopposed advance. Almost as soon as it moved forward, it came under heavy fire from its right front and also from the left. Nevertheless it managed to keep up with the barrage and to reach the first objective at the expected time, largely thanks to Serjeant W. Isherwood who, having taken command of his platoon when the officer (Second-Lieutenant G. H. Stelfox) was wounded, rushed a "pill-box" and led his men to their place on the "Dotted Green Line."

About 6 a.m. the prisoners taken by "A" and "B" Companies had begun to reach battalion headquarters. Within half an hour at least 150 Germans had been collected. They belonged to the 441st and 447th Infantry Regiments and were Hessians. Thereafter a steady stream of prisoners came in, many of them carrying or helping the wounded of both sides.

Meanwhile, the battle went on. As soon as they had reached the first objective, "A" and "B" Companies began to dig in on it. "C" and "D" passed through them and lay down close behind the barrage, which had paused to protect the holders of the "Green Dotted Line." When it moved on, these companies moved too, but with ranks sadly thinned by casualties and having lost many of their commanders. Their numbers were, however, increased by men of other units who had become separated from their own folk in the confusion of battle—the Guards, Worcestershire, the Duke of Wellington's and the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers—in addition to a considerable proportion of the 2nd Royal Fusiliers, the reserve battalion of the 86th Infantry Brigade, which had closed up on the tail of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers and become intermingled with it. Such was the confusion that from now on the operations were continued by the individual initiative and leadership of junior officers and N.C.Os. who gathered round them small groups of soldiers, regardless of their regiment, and did their best to push on.

Just as "C" Company began its advance, the enemy counter-attacked from the north and north-east, supported by much rifle fire which caused a considerable number of casualties. This attempt was, however, driven off by rifle fire and the Germans were so roughly handled by the creeping barrage that they retired in front of the company. All the officers were hit except Second-Lieutenant J. F. R. Le Mesurier, who took command of a mixed body of troops and succeeded in establishing himself in Senegal Farm, on the "Blue Dotted Line," the remains of a farm-house with a "pill-box" in the middle of it. He at once began to consolidate his position and took steps to protect his right flank where there was a gap between himself and the left of the 2nd Battalion. In this he was ably helped by Serjeant F. Diver, who had also succeeded to the command of his platoon when the subaltern became a casualty. He had been badly shaken by the explosion of a shell but had nevertheless continued to lead his men forward. On Le Mesurier's orders, he took them to the right of Senegal Farm and established a firm protection on the exposed flank. The precautions thus taken were not super-

fluous ; for the Germans launched yet another attack from the north and north-east, this time to the number of about a battalion in eight lines. But it was a half-hearted effort which withered away under the rifle fire of the now firmly established line.

"D" Company on the left had also advanced with the barrage, but seems to have drifted somewhat to its right. The British artillery, unaware of the situation, was firing short at this stage and several casualties resulted, including the death of the company commander, Second-Lieutenant G. Garnet. Command devolved on Second-Lieutenant B. W. Addison, but the men of the company were by now so scattered that he was able to exercise little direct control over it. Nevertheless he collected such troops as he could and reached the final objective. He also established a post, consisting of half a dozen men of the 16th Middlesex Regiment, between Senegal Farm and Tranquille House, while a few men of one of his platoons dug themselves in with men of the Newfoundland and Worcestershire Regiments near the latter place. Lance-Corporal T. O'Sullivan did useful work during this stage of the attack. With three men, he attacked an enemy strong-point which had been causing casualties, and seized it, capturing a machine gun and killing or taking prisoner all its occupants.

Thus by about 10 a.m. the battalion had accomplished its task, but with a loss of all but five of the company officers and of half the total of other ranks. Its front line was strengthened at about noon by the sending up under Company Serjeant-Major C. Murphy of scattered parties collected from various places by him. He disposed them in good defensive positions and took advantage of his presence in the forward area to mark out, under considerable fire, a track leading back to battalion headquarters, without which the relief of the leading companies would have been even more difficult than it was.

Early in the afternoon, Lieutenant-Colonel Hart Synnot received orders that the whole of his line would be taken over by the Middlesex Regiment and the Royal Fusiliers and that he was to re-form his battalion on the first objective. Shortly after, he received a second order stating that the battalion would be relieved altogether that night. Slowly and painfully the relief was carried out, but Le Mesurier and his flanking party, now reduced to four in all, could not leave till some time after the remainder. It was not until next day that they reached the battalion's camp near Elverdinghe. When they did, the camp turned out *en masse* and greeted them with cheers. As the Divisional Commander, Major-General Sir H. de B. de Lisle, said, "Whatever honour Lieutenant Le Mesurier may gain in life, none can equal the spontaneous approbation of their comrades in the ranks so freely offered to himself and his four men."

The immediate honour awarded to him was the Military Cross. For his conspicuous gallantry Serjeant J. Lister received the Victoria Cross, the tenth to be won by the Regiment since the beginning of

the war. Captain R. Downes was awarded a bar to his Military Cross. The latter decoration was also awarded to Lieutenants T. H. Roughton, S. H. Winterbottom and R. Wilson (the latter for valuable work as brigade transport officer in leading forward a convoy of pack mules with ammunition badly needed by the reserve battalion and, when he found the only crossing over the Stroombeek considered feasible to be no longer passable, risking another place, in full view of the enemy, by which he led his animals through heavy shelling to their destination) and Second-Lieutenant B. W. Addison. Serjeant W. Brain received a bar to his Distinguished Conduct Medal, the latter being awarded to Company Serjeant-Major C. Murphy, Serjeants F. Diver and W. Isherwood and Lance-Corporal T. O'Sullivan. Military Medals were granted to the following :—

Serjeant T. Blomeley.
Serjeant T. Gore.
Serjeant G. H. McDowell
Corporal T. Banks.
Corporal W. Fells.
Lance-Corporal J. E. Alker.
Lance-Corporal A. Thomas.
Private R. Allen.
Private F. W. Banner.
Private E. L. Boyd.
Private D. Broatch.
Private L. Cairns.
Private L. Cundy.
Private T. C. Fisher.
Private J. D. McArdle.
Private W. McGloughlin.
Private J. Morris.
Private W. Reid.
Private R. Rowell.
Private T. Virgo.
Serjeant W. Brett.
Serjeant E. Ingham.
Serjeant J. Pennington.
Corporal J. E. Edwards.
Corporal J. Grundy.
Lance-Corporal T. Davies.
Private R. Abbott.
Private G. Ball.
Private E. Bentley.
Private T. Bramhill.
Private C. H. Buzzard.
Private J. E. Chatburn.
Private H. Fisher.
Private T. Harvey.
Private J. McGillivray.
Private W. Morgan.
Private F. O'Sullivan.
Private W. Robins.
Private H. Taylor.
Private J. T. Worsley.
Private S. Yates.

The battalion's losses were 2 officers and 26 other ranks killed, 8 officers and 138 other ranks wounded and 13 men missing.

2ND BN. It is now time to follow the fortunes of the 2nd Battalion (Major J. W. Watkins) on the immediate right of the 1st Battalion. From 1st to 5th October the battalion was at Roussel Farm, Elverdinghe ; and on three of those days, seven officers and all available men had to march six miles to the forward area, work till midnight or later in preparation for the impending attack and march six miles back again to their camp. On 5th October, the battalion moved to Wolfe Camp, also near Elverdinghe, where a draft of 100 N.C.Os. and men joined. This brought the total strength to 34 officers and 924 other ranks, of whom 21 officers and 480 other ranks went up to the line on 7th October, while 3 officers and 107 N.C.Os. and men stayed in the transport lines as "battle reserve." The remainder were on leave (20), in hospital (38), on courses (18), attached to a field ambulance as stretcher-bearers (15), employed with an engineer working party (26), or detached for duty with such varied units and officers as the divisional canteen, the XIVth Corps Burial Officer, the divisional band, 11th and 12th Infantry Brigade Headquarters

and 4th Divisional Headquarters, the Area Commandant at Proven (who absorbed four men) and a rest camp. It is small wonder therefore that each company consisted of three platoons instead of the normal four.

The weather broke on 5th October, but the rain stopped just before the battalion moved off on 7th October to relieve the 1st Hampshire Regiment in the line close to the western edge of Poelcappelle, so that a fine day was enjoyed on the 8th with a good, drying breeze. Unfortunately, towards the evening of that day, rain came down again and made the final preparations almost as difficult as they were for the 1st Battalion. During the night of 8th/9th, tapes were put out by the Royal Engineers, and the companies formed up between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m., all being ready by 3.20 a.m. "A" Company (Second-Lieutenant C. U. Lloyd) was on the right and "C" Company (Captain J. Judd) on the left, with "B" Company (Captain G. L. Elkington) and "D" Company (Lieutenant A. D. Macdonald, M.C.) in support. One platoon of "B" Company and one of "D" were detailed as "moppers-up" for "A" and "C" Companies respectively. The battalion's first and second objectives were a continuation in a south-easterly direction of those laid down for the 1st Battalion; but it had a third objective about seven hundred yards beyond its second.

At 5 a.m. Major Watkins and his headquarters moved up to 19 Metre Hill, within a few yards of the front line, so as to be close to the attacking waves with which they moved forward—a position maintained throughout the greater part of the attack. Twenty minutes later the attack began, under cover of a thick barrage provided by a great variety of guns ranging from 18-pounders to 9.2-in. howitzers. The German barrage came down on the support line three minutes after the attack started and caused the support battalion to move up rather too fast and to become mingled with the rear waves of the 2nd Battalion, just as had happened in the case of the 1st Battalion. But the attacking troops reached their first objective up to time at 5.45 a.m. and with very few casualties. As one officer put it, "for the first five or six minutes, it was like a practice attack on parade." The difficulties began as the advance towards the second objective started and particularly when the light railway running alongside the Poelcappelle-Houthulst Forest road was reached. The division on the right had been held up in the ruins of Poelcappelle and consequently German machine guns were still able to fire down this road from the north-west end of the village. There were also a number of snipers who had escaped the barrage and who were very active near Landing Farm and Compromis Farm (both north of Poelcappelle) and from Millers Houses, on the dividing line between the 1st and 2nd Battalions. It was from the Houses that the first serious check came, with the result that the barrage was lost and, when the troops were finally able to cross the main road, they were no longer protected by the artillery but had to jump from shell hole to shell hole.

By 10.30 a.m. only six officers were left with the companies, "B" Company having none, and the casualties had been about 120. When Major Watkins realized the position, he and his intelligence officer (Captain S. Clarke) at once went to the most forward positions and began to reorganize the troops a process which was badly needed as men from the 2nd Duke of Wellington's, the 1st King's Own, the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers and other units had become mixed with the 2nd Battalion. Moreover, owing to the appalling state of the ground which had been cut to pieces by shell fire, it was almost impossible for any officer or N.C.O. to handle more than half a dozen men. Watkins and Clarke, however, succeeded in collecting a party of various regiments with a view to an attack on Millers Houses. Detachments went round both flanks, co-operating on the left with some men of the 1st Battalion. The fate of the garrison of this troublesome place was sealed by Serjeant C. A. Watch, who took three men and rushed a machine gun which had been holding up the advance, put it out of action, and induced the garrison of two officers and some thirty Germans to surrender at about 11 a.m. Watkins's action had cleared the path for a further advance but, owing to the condition of the ground, to heavy shell fire and to continuous sniping, he was unable to reach the advancing companies or to influence their action further. He saw the enemy massing for a counter-attack near Senegal Farm, on the 1st Battalion's front, but was powerless to help.

The advance towards the second objective was very slow. Judd displayed great gallantry and initiative in rallying parties of men and leading them forward from one shell hole to another as far as he could. Serjeant W. Sidlow and Corporal F. G. Deeley both showed pluck and determination in rushing enemy posts and, between them, taking a number of prisoners. But by noon it had become evident that the attack had, through no fault of the troops, lost its momentum; and Major Watkins ordered the leading troops to dig in where they were. They had managed to reach a position half-way between the first and second objectives and had advanced about four hundred yards on the right and six hundred yards on the left, where touch was gained with Le Mesurier's party of the 1st Battalion under the supervision of Clarke, who performed most useful work in organizing a line of posts under heavy sniping fire. Serjeant Watch's adventures were not yet over, however. When the stand-fast order was given, he and his party found themselves in the enemy's lines and had the unpleasant sensation of experiencing the nature of the British barrage which was put down to cover the consolidation of the position which had been gained. Nevertheless, as by a miracle they survived and succeeded in making their way back to the battalion's lines. The credit for the safe delivery of the order to consolidate was due mainly to Corporal E. Stockton, who throughout the day carried messages from battalion headquarters to the companies in spite of heavy fire and of all the difficulties which have been described. Never once did he fail to deliver a message to the

right quarters, a very fine achievement when company headquarters were in unmarked shell holes and nobody could be expected to know their whereabouts or direct a runner to them. Stockton was also very useful later in the operation in guiding ration parties from the rear to the troops in the line. Corporal T. Lancashire, the medical officer's assistant, seemed to bear a charmed life as he walked about in search of wounded, quite indifferent to all bullets.

The battalion spent the night of 9th/10th October in the positions it had won. The conditions were very bad. The shell holes were half filled with water, the men had no cover and it was bitterly cold. Fortunately the depression spread to both sides and there was no activity during the night. But the casualties had not ended. At about 2 a.m. Major Watkins was hit by a stray bullet through the right arm and had to leave his headquarters, though he was back again with the battalion within a fortnight. The adjutant, Captain G. C. Martin, M.C., assumed command, but four hours later he was hit by a piece of shrapnel and was compelled to go to hospital. Clarke then took command, with Second-Lieutenant R. Gilmour as his adjutant. There were no counter-attacks during 10th October, but German snipers were very active. The battalion was relieved that night and it was due to Clarke's personal initiative and energy that the process was carried out without a hitch. The troops had been amazingly cheerful throughout the operation and were in good heart when they reached Redan Camp, near Brielen, early on 11th October. At 5 p.m. next day the battalion entrained at Elverdinghe and detrained two hours later at Proven, whence they marched to what one officer described as "probably the muddiest camp the battalion had ever been in."

The medical officer, Captain C. R. R. Huxtable, M.C., had once more shown a complete disregard of his personal safety in the discharge of his duties, and he was awarded a bar to his decoration. Captains S. Clarke and J. Judd received the Military Cross, while the Distinguished Conduct Medal was given to Serjeants C. A. Watch and W. Sidlow and to Corporals F. G. Deeley and E. Stockton. The good work of the following was recognized by the grant of the Military Medal :—

Serjeant W. Evans.
Serjeant J. Leonard.
Corporal T. Lancashire.
Private R. Amscow.
Private C. Breen.
Private A. Davies.
Private G. Hobden.
Private C. Kirk.
Serjeant G. B. A. Lawes.
Serjeant J. Shaw.
Corporal F. Nicholson.
Private J. H. Booth.
Private H. W. Gaby.
Private D. Jones.
Private J. Liles.
Private J. A. Prior.

In addition, Lance-Corporal G. Brown, M.M., a stretcher-bearer, was awarded a bar to the Military Medal. The battalion's casualties were 3 officers and 33 other ranks killed, 8 officers and 126 other ranks wounded and 1 officer and 41 other ranks missing.

The Territorial Battalions

If mud and confusion added to the difficulties of the Regular battalions on 9th October, this was even more the case with the 197th Infantry Brigade farther to the south. This formation comprised the 3rd/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel A. S. Bates, D.S.O., T.D.), 2nd 6th (Lieutenant-Colonel H. L. Anderton), 2nd/7th (Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Hobbins) and 2nd/8th (Lieutenant-Colonel H. Gordon Roberts) Battalions, and had spent the summer on the Belgian coast, moving by bus on 27th September to Arques, near St. Omer. On 2nd October it marched some sixteen miles to Eecke, five miles south-east of Cassel, and two days later to a camp about 2,000 yards north of Winnizeele. Its stay there was short, for late on 5th October it received orders to embus early on 6th for Brandhoek. There was only just time to prepare for the move, but fortunately the buses were late—"as usual" the record unkindly adds. From Brandhoek the brigade marched to a very wet and uncomfortable bivouac on the western slope of the Frezenberg Ridge, where it spent the next two days, suffering intermittent shelling and a number of casualties.

3RD/5TH, 2ND/6TH, 2ND/7TH AND 2ND/8TH BNS.

It had been brought thither in order to take part in the operations on 9th October. One brigade of the 66th (East Lancashire) Division was already in the line, which ran in a north-westerly direction from the Ypres-Roulers railway, crossing the latter at a bend about half-way between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele. The 197th Brigade, with the 2nd Australian Division on its right and the 198th Brigade on its left, had two objectives. The first, called the "Red Line," was parallel to the existing line, its right resting on "Defy Crossing" where the Ypres-Roulers railway crossed the Broodseinde-Passchendaele road. The second was named the "Blue Line" and lay roughly parallel to the "Red Line" and about half a mile to the north-east of it and about the same distance from the village of Passchendaele. The 3rd/5th Battalion was to take the whole of the "Red Line" within the brigade's frontage, and then be ready to detail parties to carry stores and ammunition to the second objective on its capture. The 2nd/8th on the right and the 2nd/6th on the left were to support the 3rd/5th closely and pass through it on the "Red Line" and be responsible for reaching and holding the "Blue Line." The 2nd/7th was to be in reserve and to follow behind the 2nd/6th and 2nd/8th, detailing one company for the close support of the latter and being prepared to thicken its line where necessary. The 3rd/5th was to relieve the 2nd/7th Manchester Regiment in the line on the night 8th/9th October and all troops were to be in position on the tapes which marked their forming-up lines by 3.20 a.m.

It was not considered advisable that large numbers of troops should cross the Frezenberg Ridge during daylight and the approach march was therefore timed to begin at 6.30 p.m. on 8th October, which allowed eight and three-quarter hours in which to cover the two and a half miles to the tapes. Two tracks, called "Jack" and "Jill," were available and had also been marked with tapes; and

guides were provided. But the tracks had been used all day by pack animals taking forward food and ammunition and had, moreover, been heavily shelled, with the result that they were in a very bad state. The weather and the shelling had turned the whole area into a sea of mud, and where one track crossed the Zonnebeke stream, mud "of a very adhesive nature" came well over the knees of the infantry. Men were often up to their waists in water which had collected in shell holes and there seems little doubt that several were actually drowned through sinking down into the water from the weight of their equipment and sheer exhaustion. Moreover a certain number of troops were coming back along the tracks and this hampered movement in the forward direction. Several of the guides disappeared and, as the tapes had been broken by the traffic and the shelling, platoons had great difficulty in finding their way. On the top of all these serious causes of delays, sleet came down. By about 12.30 a.m. it became evident that the brigade would not reach the tapes by zero, which was at 5.20 a.m., much less by 3.20 a.m. as laid down in orders. Every available staff officer was sent forward to try all possible means of getting the troops forward more quickly, with orders to push on all men who were able to move with any speed, irrespective of unit, and to leave those who were exhausted to come on later. Throughout the night men struggled forward as best they could, but at zero the situation of the brigade was that the head of the 3rd 5th was on the tapes, the 2nd 8th was about four hundred yards short of them, the 2nd/7th was coming over Hill 40, close to Zonnebeke, and the 2nd 6th (which should have been ahead of the 2nd 7th) was on the west side of the hill. Just as the march ended, the Commanding Officer of the 2nd 8th was wounded and Captain B. Macpherson took command. In the meanwhile orders had been sent to Lieutenant-Colonel Bates at his headquarters in the front line to take command of all troops there, to send forward whatever parties of the brigade were at hand and if necessary to use the 2nd/7th Manchester Regiment which was still in the line. The 3rd/5th went straight on as soon as they reached the starting line. A mixture of other units began to arrive by driblets at the tapes at 5.50 a.m. At 6 a.m. the leading elements of the 2nd 7th advanced, very weary after the eleven hours' exhausting approach march but full of determination. The 2nd 8th advanced soon after and by 7.20 a.m. the "Red Line" had been captured with a number of prisoners. The 2nd 6th reached the tapes in single file at 7.30 a.m. and at once deployed and moved forward. "B" Company (Captain H. C. Gill) went to the right and eventually joined up with the 3rd 5th at about 9.30 a.m. "A" (Second Lieutenant J. B. Cartside), "C" (Captain F. Chesnutt-Chesney) and "D" (Lieutenant W. B. McCulloch) Companies took up a position on the right of the East Lancashire Regiment of the 198th Brigade and to the left of Augustus Wood which lay in the "Red Line." Finding that there was a gap to their right, they moved across and filled it so as to make certain of the firm holding of that line.

In the meanwhile the 2nd/8th, with elements of the 3rd/5th, were pushing on towards the "Blue Line," which they reached at about 0.30 a.m. and began to consolidate. Patrols under Captain P. T. Millers, of the 2nd/8th, and Captain F. M. Bentley, of the 3rd/5th, went still farther and reached the outskirts of Passchendaele itself, where the bodies of men of these two battalions were found when the village was captured on 6th November. The process of consolidation was not undisturbed, as the Germans launched two counter-attacks during the morning; but owing to the state of the ground and the rifle fire of the troops, these broke down. Nevertheless the parties on the "Blue Line" were heavily shelled, and both their flanks were in the air as the units on the right and left had been unable to advance so far. Orders were issued for a defensive flank to be formed on the left, which involved the movement of several sections to the rear in order to take up their correct positions. This was mistaken by other men for a systematic withdrawal and all the troops on the "Blue Line" retired, in good order, to the "Red Line" at about 1.30 p.m.

Nothing had been seen or heard of the brigade on the left; and at 2 p.m. the 2nd/6th were ordered to take steps to protect the left flank. The "Red Line" was then firmly held by the 3rd/5th, 2nd/8th and 2nd/6th, in that order from right to left, though there was still very much intermingling of units, as is shown by the fact that Hillside Farm, near the right of the line, was occupied by officers and men of all three battalions. Shortly before 3 p.m., the Commanding Officer and medical officer of the 2nd/6th were wounded and the adjutant (Captain J. A. Kay) was killed, command being assumed by Captain F. Chesnutt-Chesney. At about the same time orders were received that the "Blue Line" was to be retaken. The attack was ordered for 4.30 p.m., but the time was subsequently altered to 5.15 p.m. There was to be a barrage lasting half an hour. All arrangements were made and units reorganized as far as possible; but at 5.13 p.m. the Germans began a heavy bombardment under cover of which they launched a counter-attack. All idea of attack was consequently abandoned. Indeed, in one or two places a temporary retirement resulted. But the enemy assault was driven off at 5.30 p.m. by rifle and artillery fire, and the line was restored and strengthened. Such is the necessarily brief outline of the work of 197th Infantry Brigade this day; with the confusion which reigned from the start, it is not possible to give a more detailed account of the doings of battalions or companies. But the gallant conduct of certain individuals can be recorded to some extent, though particulars are lacking of many of the meritorious deeds performed. Captain Bentley, of the 3rd/5th, who has been mentioned as having led a patrol into Passchendaele, was wounded in the leg early in the day, but nevertheless stayed with his troops even after the withdrawal from the "Blue Line" until he could no longer stand. In the same battalion, Lieutenant J. A. Holdsworth performed invaluable work as signal officer and as liaison officer with other

units, his task being particularly difficult in view of the mixing of units and the uncertainty as to the whereabouts of the line and of the various headquarters. Private J. Anyon, of the 3rd/5th, though wounded in the thigh during the early stages of the attack, carried on and brought his Lewis gun into action on an exposed flank. When the enemy counter-attacked, he stayed where he was in an advanced shell hole and kept up a sustained stream of bullets which effectively prevented the Germans from turning the flank. He was quite alone, but remained at his post until more men could be sent to him on the following day. Lance-Corporal E. Edmondson, also of the 3rd/5th, achieved an unusual feat. He had been most useful in collecting men and leading them forward; and when the enemy put down a barrage near his post and threatened a counter-attack, he went out alone to meet a group of German scouts, shot one and brought in two of them as prisoners. The medical officer of the battalion, Captain H. A. Sandiford, R.A.M.C., established his aid post close behind the front line as soon as the attack started and, when it was full of men, continued to dress wounds in the open. In this exposed position he worked devotedly for forty-eight hours with the greatest coolness in spite of heavy shelling.

In the 2nd/6th Battalion, Captain C. H. Potter displayed great devotion to duty in charge of a carrying party which brought up water and ammunition through a heavy bombardment when it was badly needed. He also did much useful work in collecting and bringing back information when, owing to the confusion, the situation was far from clear. Corporal F. H. Skelton took command of his platoon when the officer was knocked out and held ground with it against a determined counter-attack. Later, having located a German sniper who had been causing a number of casualties, he was on his way to try conclusions with him, when he was wounded. As usual, signallers earned high praise. Serjeant W. Cryer several times moved about in full view of the enemy in order to mend broken lines under heavy fire; while Private W. G. Upton was employed almost without rest for thirty hours in carrying messages to all parts of the area over which the battalion was scattered, never once failing to deliver them. Twice he was blown into the air by shells, but pulled himself together and carried on. When at length the battalion was relieved he collapsed from sheer fatigue and had to be helped out of the line.

The 2nd 7th attained the unusual distinction of the Distinguished Service Order being awarded both to the Commanding Officer and the second in-command, Major C. Alderson, for their skilful work in leading the troops into action on their own initiative, in helping to produce order out of chaos at various stages and in contributing to the defeat of counter-attacks and to the successful withdrawal of the leading lines when their flanks were exposed. An officer of the battalion who was attached to brigade headquarters, Lieutenant G. B. Parkes, was also singled out for reward on account of his work when in charge of forward dumps and supplies: he personally

guided and directed carrying parties over difficult ground to the advanced positions, often under heavy shelling.

When the Commanding Officer of the 2nd/8th was wounded just before the attack began and a company commander had to take his place, much additional responsibility inevitably fell on the shoulders of the adjutant, Captain R. L. Busby, who not only managed to keep brigade headquarters informed of the situation but collected men from various units who were scattered in shell-holes through lack of a leader, put a N.C.O. or senior soldier in command of each party and sent them forward. In every case the men, though dead tired, responded cheerfully to the inspiration of his coolness and tact. He was ably helped by his regimental serjeant-major, J. T. Le Huray, who did most excellent work in organizing carrying parties, collecting ammunition under bombardment and sending it forward when it was needed. At one stage he went back himself under machine-gun fire to the brigade dump in order to bring up a further supply of "S O S" signal cartridges. In the forward positions, Company Serjeant-Major J. Bullen, of the 2nd/8th, behaved with conspicuous gallantry. He found himself in command of one of the most advanced posts His party was much reduced by casualties; and he went out, regardless of the machine-gun fire which was sweeping the area, and collected a few more men, with whose help he maintained his position until he was relieved.

The day after the attack was comparatively uneventful and was devoted to reorganization and a strengthening of the line, in which a gap was found during the morning The 2nd 6th sent forward a company which was behind Hillside Farm to complete the position. The whole area was heavily shelled during the afternoon and again in the evening. But the worst was over. For at 7.30 p.m. the 44th Australian Battalion arrived to begin the relief of the brigade, which was completed by 6 a.m. the next morning. Lieutenant-Colonel Hobbins and a large party were left behind to ensure the removal of all wounded of the brigade.

Messages of congratulation on what the troops had managed to achieve, in spite of such discouraging handicaps, came from Army, Corps and Divisional Commanders, and a few days later the brigade was inspected by Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig himself, who expressed his appreciation of its efforts. Telegrams were also received from the Lord Mayor of Manchester, the East Lancashire Territorial Force Association and the boys, girls and teachers of Blackley Municipal School, Manchester. The decorations which were awarded were as follows :—

3RD/5TH BATTALION

Military Cross

Captain F. M. Bentley. Captain H. A. Sandiford, R.A.M.C.
Lieutenant J. A. Holdsworth.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Private J. Anyon. Lance-Corporal E. Edmondson.

Military Medal

Serjeant T. Entwistle.
Serjeant H. Summersgill.
Corporal W. J. Sharp.
Lance-Corporal J. H. Power.
Private T. Hall.
Private J. Holt.
Private R. W. James.
Private J. Picton.
Private M. Turner.
Serjeant H. Nichols.
Lance-Serjeant A. Duxbury.
Lance-Corporal J. E. Kelsall.
Private E. Edgerton.
Private J. F. Hertwick.
Private J. W. Hunt.
Private J. O'Hara.
Private F. Toole.
Private P. Uphill.

2ND/6TH BATTALION

Military Cross

Captain C. H. Potter.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Serjeant W. Cryer.
Corporal F. H. Skelton.
Private W. G. Upton.

Military Medal

Company Quartermaster-Serjeant A Hardman.
Serjeant F. Berry.
Serjeant W. T. Smith.
Corporal R. Dixon.
Lance-Corporal W. Fallows.
Private J. Dolan.
Private J. Swallow.
Serjeant F. Leach.
Serjeant A. Stout.
Corporal J. Gwinnutt.
Private H. Baxter.
Private A. Jackson.
Private J. B. Venables.

2ND/7TH BATTALION

Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Hobbins.
Major C. Alderson.

Military Cross

Lieutenant G. B. Parkes.

Military Medal

Serjeant T. Aldridge.
Serjeant J. W. Thomas.
Corporal W. H. Molyneux.
Lance-Corporal A. N. Beard.
Lance-Corporal G. Milnes.
Private A. Bostock.
Private M. Hanney.
Serjeant E. Ball.
Lance-Serjeant V. C. Wright.
Corporal J. Chadwick.
Lance-Corporal J. E. Bailey.
Private A. Booth.
Private H. Drinkwater.
Private G. W. Holt.
Private C. Robinson.

2ND/8TH BATTALION

Military Cross

Captain R. L. Busby.
Captain B. Macpherson.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Regimental Serjeant-Major J. T. Le Huray.
Company Serjeant-Major J. Bullen.

Military Medal

Company Quartermaster-Serjeant J. Dickinson.
Corporal E. Howard.
Lance-Corporal W. Daley.
Private R. W. Hodgson.
Private W. A. Reed.
Corporal H. Trevor.
Private A. Davenport.
Private J. E. Holmes.
Private W. Richardson.
Private J. Thomas.

The casualties had been heavy though a considerable number of the missing proved to have been wounded and evacuated by other units or else killed, the final figure being reduced to thirty-five in the case of the 3rd/5th Battalion.

	3rd/5th		2nd/6th		2nd/7th		2nd/8th		Total	
	Off.	O.R.	Off.	O.R.	Off.	O.R.	Off.	O.R.	Off.	O.R.
Killed ...	4	42	3	29	1	32	3	32	11	135
Wounded ...	6	184	7	146	8	126	9	204	30	660
Missing ...	1	79	1	56	1	114	1	138	4	387
Totals ...	11	305	11	231	10	272	13	374	45	1,182

The Pioneer Battalion

The 19th battalion also earned the battle honour "Poelcappelle" by being at work on roads and tracks near Frezenberg for the benefit of the attack of its division (49th) on 9th October, though its real contribution had been made in that area in the preceding days.

The Attack at Houthulst Forest
22nd October, 1917

17th, 18th and 20th Battalions

Earlier in this chapter the story has been told of the raids carried out at Gillemont Farm in September, 1917, by the 17th and 20th Battalions. Shortly afterwards these two units and their sister battalion, the 18th, were taken out of the line and moved to a peaceful area behind the front for ten days' rest and training in the attack. While there, the 17th Battalion received a visit from Colonel F. Amber, of the Provost Marshal's staff, a former commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion, who presented the ribands of the Military Medal to N.C.Os. and men of the unit recently rewarded. On 15th October the three battalions went by train to Proven, and next day into the line just to the south of Houthulst Forest and about 1,000 yards north of the positions reached by the 1st Battalion on 9th October. On 17th October they were visited by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, who was at the time a Staff Captain at the headquarters of the XIVth Corps.

The 104th Infantry Brigade was having its first experience of the Ypres Salient and was soon to have its first taste of battle in the changed circumstances of 1917. It had received many drafts shortly before, and to all the conditions were entirely new. As elsewhere in the battle zone, the front line was a series of shell holes, mostly filled with water as the result of the frequent rains of August, September and the first part of October. The approaches to it were very exposed and consisted chiefly of mud. Indeed, movement to the brigade's sector was practically confined to two duck-board tracks. It was with this background that the 32nd Division received orders to deliver an attack on 22nd October with the object of creating a strong left flank in readiness for later operations farther

to the east towards Staden and Passchendaele. Within the division, the 104th Infantry Brigade was to attack on the right and the 105th on the left. The 104th Brigade's objective was a line running nearly east and west through Houthulst Forest and about five hundred yards within its southern edge. Its frontage, from Aden House near the Ypres–Staden railway to the main road leading from Poelcappelle to Houthulst and on to Dixmude, was eight hundred yards in extent. But its share of the objective, which lay 1,000 yards from the starting line, was 1,300 yards; and this increase in the area to be covered constituted a serious problem in the organization of the attack. Brigadier-General J. W. Sandilands, C.M.G., D.S.O., commanding the 104th Infantry Brigade, solved it by arranging that the 23rd Manchester Regiment on the right and the 17th Lancashire Fusiliers (Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. F. Crook, D.S.O.) on the left should begin the attack and that the 18th Lancashire Fusiliers (Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Irvine, C.M.G., D.S.O.) should at first be in close support and should come between the two leading battalions as the advance progressed and the frontage widened. The 20th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. Vaughan, D.S.O., Manchester Regiment) was to be in reserve. The advance lay over open country, commanded by the bulk of the Forest, into the marshy outskirts of this great wooded area. But the risks of exposure were to be overcome by taking advantage of the half-light of dawn for the launching of the operation.

The brigade formed up in its assembly positions by 2 a.m. on 22nd October, and at zero, 5.35 a.m., the waves moved off in perfect order.

17TH BN. In the 17th Battalion, the first and second waves consisted of "X" Company (Captain L. Kitchin) on the right and "W" Company (Captain R. S. Heape, M.C.) on the left, with "Y" Company (Lieutenant J. Goodier) as the third and "Z" Company (Lieutenant H. G. Leaver) as the fourth waves. At 6 a.m. a message was received from Heape saying that he had captured Colombo House, which lay on the main Poelcappelle-Houthulst road about four hundred yards from the starting line, and adding "Best sport going—Right in our own barrage." This closeness to the barrage led to his finding himself considerably ahead of the unit on his left and to his being compelled to take two strong points in their area in order not to have his outer flank enfiladed. By about 6.30 a.m., Heape, Kitchin and Goodier were all established on their objective and between them had captured a machine gun and some twenty prisoners. Up to this time no news had come in from any other part of the line. Suddenly those at the 17th Battalion's headquarters at Egypt House, on the main road about four hundred yards behind the starting line, became aware of a straggling crowd of men coming towards them from the right. What had happened was that something had gone wrong with the arrangements of the division next on the right and its units had not been able to advance. The right flank of the 23rd Manchester Regiment had thus been exposed and the leading

waves of that battalion had not only lost very heavily but had tended to incline to their right before they were finally held up and so
18TH BN to lose touch with the 18th Lancashire Fusiliers.

The latter had also partly lost direction, and some of its platoons even came up on the left of the 17th Battalion, whose waves were ordered to establish strong points on their right flank, while its "Z" Company was instructed to swing half-right so as to cover the exposed right rear. In spite of the stopping of the 23rd Manchester Regiment, the 18th Battalion pushed on as far as it could, but began to suffer heavy casualties. At about 6.15 a.m., Captain M. R. Wood, M.C., commanding "X" Company of the 18th, realized that he had worked too far to his left and moved his men back a short distance and then across to the right, with the object of re-establishing touch with the Manchester Regiment and of finding a clear way forward to the Forest. The unfortunate double effect of the delay on the right and the partial loss of direction in the centre was that some huts which the Germans occupied in the middle of the zone of attack were not dealt with. Fire from them continued throughout the day to hold up the Manchesters, and they not only prevented Wood's company from gaining contact with that unit, but also caused it numerous casualties on its way to the Forest. On approaching the outskirts of the latter, Second-Lieutenant P. Torrance saw a German machine gun in action in front of him. He promptly sent his men round each flank and then charged the positions himself, capturing the gun and its crew. This gallant action enabled "X" Company to gain a footing within the Forest. Progress was also helped by the bravery and dash of Lance-Corporal J. A. Attley, who rushed forward under heavy fire and single-handed captured the whole of a German machine-gun crew who were causing casualties. But "X" Company's right flank was entirely unprotected; and as they became almost surrounded by Germans they were compelled after a hard fight to withdraw to the edge. Torrance was wounded at this stage and as he refused to withdraw till all others had left he could not be brought away. His servant stayed with him and both were taken prisoner. Wood was also lost to the company, being killed in the Forest.

The left half of the leading wave of the 18th Battalion, however, succeeded in reaching its objective and in establishing firm contact with the 17th Battalion, though the men of both battalions were now in a very exhausted state, owing to the heavy and broken condition of the ground over which they had advanced. Moreover, there still existed a dangerous gap on the right of the 18th. To fill it, the brigade commander at about 11 a.m. ordered up two companies
20TH BN. of the 20th Battalion. They advanced under Captain W. A. Swarbrick through very heavy shell fire and took up a position with their right at Aden House. They were well installed by 12 noon and sent out officers' patrols to a distance of about five hundred yards to the north-east in order to gain touch with the division on the right if possible. Soon after these companies had moved forward, the rest

of the 20th Battalion was ordered to occupy the original front line as a defensive position. The situation on the brigade's front then was that the 17th Battalion was in touch with the unit on its left on the main road and held about two hundred yards of its objective ; that its right was bent back in a south-south-easterly direction, but was not in close contact with any troops on this flank ; that the 18th Battalion held some part of their objective and were beginning to form a firm line in continuation of that held by the 17th ; and that two companies of the 20th completed the position to the starting line, which was held by the rest of the latter battalion.

Early in the afternoon, as the state of affairs became clearer to them, the Germans opened artillery fire on these positions and seriously delayed the arrival of "X" Company of the 20th Battalion at its allotted position in reserve. At about 2 p.m. the brigade major brought an order from the brigadier that the battalions were to consolidate on approximately the line just described, but with posts well to the front of it. The 20th Battalion was to be responsible for the sector from Aden House to the huts, the 18th from the huts to the junction of two rides in the Forest, and the 17th thence to the main road, the 23rd Manchester Regiment being withdrawn to reserve.

About two hours later word came back to the battalion headquarters that the Germans were massing in the Forest with the evident intention of counter-attacking. The artillery were warned by telephone, by runner and by pigeon messages, and very quickly opened their counter-preparation. Nevertheless the Germans succeeded in launching their stroke. The forward companies of the 17th Battalion brought heavy rifle and Lewis-gun fire to bear on the attackers, who were also caught by the guns and were soon broken up and sent back once more to the shelter of the Forest. Company Serjeant-Major R. Moyse, of the 20th Battalion, also played a useful part in the repulse of this assault. Part of his company had become detached, but he reorganized it and led it forward to fill a gap in the line under heavy fire, and by his skilful dispositions and good leadership contributed much to the repulse of the Germans. On the left, however, the enemy met with more success. The unit next to the 17th Battalion had suffered severely and lost almost all the officers of its leading platoons. Owing to some misunderstanding, the men began to retire. Some of them joined "W" Company of the 17th, but in general the line fell back several hundred yards. "W" and "X" Companies of the 17th were thus left in a most critical position. They occupied a salient over half a mile deep and some three hundred yards wide ; and their outer flanks were in the air. At about 6 p.m. therefore, Kitchin gave orders for them to withdraw to the support line held by "Y" Company and for the latter to swing back to its left flank so as to regain touch with the next brigade, and its right flank so as to link up with the 20th Battalion near the huts. Heape behaved with the utmost coolness and determination during this critical phase in the action ; and although slightly wounded he insisted on remaining at duty until the last of his men had withdrawn.

"Z" Company had already established itself in a strong-point covering the right rear. This new line was consolidated during the hours of darkness.

Never was night more welcome or more fully used. Rations, water and ammunition were brought up over the difficult ground behind the line by special parties; and most of the troops received a rum ration, which was much appreciated as many of them had lain all day in shell holes up to their waists in water. A number of wounded were brought in who had had to be left out during daylight owing to the shortage of stretcher-bearers and the continual sniping of the Germans. Desultory shelling went on throughout the night; and the infantry also were active. Patrols from "Y" Company of the 20th Battalion tried repeatedly to get into touch with the brigade on the right, though they did not succeed in doing so until noon on the following day. A more ambitious venture was carried out by twenty men of "Z" Company of the same battalion under Second-Lieutenant H. A. Harris. The brigadier suspected that the huts which have been mentioned were harbouring the machine guns that had caused such havoc to the Manchesters, and he ordered that they should be occupied if possible. The party was supported by a platoon of "X" Company under Second-Lieutenant R. S. Parry, destined for the occupation of the huts if they were taken. The expedition set out at 2 a.m. on the 23rd, preceded by Lance-Corporal W. Grundy and two men as scouts. These surprised a German machine gun in a shell hole, bayoneted the gunner and brought back the gun and four unwounded prisoners of the 119th Infantry Regiment. But when the main body approached the huts, the enemy sent up his "S O S" signal; and a hot artillery and machine-gun fire was opened, the latter coming from both flanks as well as from the huts themselves. Considerable casualties occurred, both the officers being hit, and it was found to be impossible to occupy the huts. Valuable information had, however, been obtained, particularly that the huts contained at least four machine guns.

The general conditions became steadily worse during the 23rd. The German artillery put down a series of barrages; and at one period a number of hostile aeroplanes flew low over the 18th Battalion, directing the guns and firing with machine guns into the positions held by it. To make matters worse, heavy rain fell. The men were in shell holes or behind small mounds of earth hastily thrown up: but whatever hollows they put themselves in were soon full of water. Owing to the great scarcity of cover and in order to economize in means of communication, the headquarters of 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions were all located at Egypt House, which was conspicuous and well known to all the men. The result was that all the wounded were brought there and that the enemy, seeing constant movement round the pill-boxes, shelled them continuously. It was almost impossible for anyone to come out of Egypt House to help the wounded, and it was not possible to carry a stretcher through the narrow doorway. It was a ghastly scene.

Serjeants H. C. Bolton, M.M., and E. Brockelbank, of the 20th Battalion, did sterling work in bringing in wounded. Bolton made numerous journeys under fire; and Brockelbank carried several men in on his back through a heavy barrage. Private O. C. Williams, a battalion headquarter runner of the 17th, also did fine work in getting through with his messages.

At last, at midnight on the 23rd, the majority of the brigade was released from its ordeal, its place being taken by the 17th Royal Scots, and made its way back to Baboon Camp on the banks of the Yser Canal near Pilckem. But so exhausted were some of the men after their exposure to wet and cold that it was with difficulty that they could leave the line, and it was not until 5 a.m. on 24th that all of the 17th and 18th reached their destination. The 20th Battalion was not so fortunate, as it was not until the following night that it was relieved and enabled to join its sister battalions. The losses of the three battalions had been as follows :—

	17th Bn.		18th Bn.		20th Bn.	
	Off.	O.R.	Off.	O.R.	Off.	O.R.
Killed	4	32	3	27	1	27
Wounded	8	142	7	174	5	168
Missing	—	5	1	42	—	12

The decorations awarded included the following :—

17TH BATTALION

Bar to Military Cross

Captain R. S. Heape, M.C.

Military Medal

Lance-Serjeant F. Tetlow. Private L. G. Briers.
Private O. C. Williams. Private T. Woods.

18TH BATTALION

Military Cross

Lieutenant A. P. Draper, R.A.M.C.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Lance-Corporal J. A. Uttley.

Military Medal

Serjeant H. Beetham. Serjeant H. Stedman.
Corporal H. W. Waldron. Lance-Corporal W. H. Fitton.
Private J. W. Morris.

20TH BATTALION

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major R. Moyse. Lance-Corporal W. Grundy, M.M.

Bar to Military Medal

Serjeant H. C. Bolton, M.M.

Military Medal

Serjeant E. Brockelbank. Serjeant J. Curran.
Private A. Guest.

The End of the Third Battle of Ypres

The great struggle which enlarged the Ypres Salient in the autumn of 1917 is so generally spoken of as the Battle of Passchendaele that it is natural that "Passchendaele" should be borne as a battle honour on the Colours. But strictly the name applies only to the fighting on 12th October ("First Passchendaele") and between 26th October and 10th November ("Second Passchendaele"). No battalion of the Regiment took any direct part in these actions, though the 19th Battalion qualified for the battle honour of "First Passchendaele" by being engaged under very trying conditions in work near Frezenberg on that day, whilst the 3rd/5th, 2nd/6th, 2nd 7th, 2nd 8th, 10th, 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions were all within the prescribed area for "Second Passchendaele."

Autumn Gleanings

1st, 5th, 1st/6th, 1st/7th and 1st/8th Bns.

The 125th Infantry Brigade (1st/5th, 1st 6th, 1st/7th, and 1st 8th Battalions) spent a fortnight in and out of the line at Ypres after its attack on 6th September and was relieved then by South African units and moved up to the Belgian coast west of Nieuport. At first it enjoyed a rest at St. Idesbalde, with beautifully warm weather, daily bathing and drill parades on the firm sands. On 5th October the brigade took over a sector of trenches north of Nieuport and on the east side of the River Yser from the 66th Division, its own second line formation. As has been described in Chapter XI, the line in this area was very sketchy and confusing. This led to an unfortunate loss for the 1st 8th Battalion on 10th October, a very dark night, when the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel G. E. Hope, M.C., Grenadier Guards, in going with two others from one company to another in the front positions, stumbled into an enemy post. They quickly went in what they thought was the right direction, only to meet another and bigger body of Germans. There followed a struggle, from which his companions managed to escape, but Lieutenant-Colonel Hope was never heard of again.

1st/8th Bn.

After the usual routine in the coastal district, the brigade was relieved by the 321st French Infantry Regiment on the night of 17th 18th November. With so many waterways, it is not surprising to find that part of the brigade moved by barge after it had been relieved , and the interesting terms "Embarged" and "Disembarging Point" appear in the War Diary of the 1st 8th Battalion. After this experience, the brigade marched all the way to Béthune, where it arrived on 27th November, going into the line at Cambrin, immediately south of the La Bassée Canal, on the following day.

9th Bn.

Not far away was the 9th Battalion, which had moved to the Lens sector, five miles farther south, at the end of October.

2nd Bn.

The 2nd Battalion was concerned with an ill-fated raid at Monchy-le-Preux in the middle of November. The object was to obtain identifications and to cause loss to the enemy. A party of twenty men of "A" Company under Second-Lieutenant R. E. J.

Walden was detailed for the task but only had three days in which to prepare for it. They made the most of the time, however, and carried out several practices; in addition to which Walden reconnoitred the ground on all three nights. The raid was to last for twenty minutes and was to take place under cover of the fire of four machine guns, four Stokes mortars and some medium trench-mortars, while the artillery cut the German wire and then placed a "box" barrage round the scene of attack. At zero—2 a.m. on 16th November—just as the raiding party was leaving its trenches, the mortar barrage fell short, bombs falling close to the troops and disorganizing them. The men advanced as quickly as they could after this, but could not make up the time they had lost. No sooner had they reached the German trenches than the recall signal was sounded on the bugle. The leader, Walden, was the only casualty, and he was killed. But the raid was not entirely fruitless; for after Walden was hit the men bombed a machine gun and silenced it.

19TH BN.

Throughout the autumn and winter of 1917, the 19th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. A. Graham, D.S.O.) was carrying out its arduous and often thankless tasks as a pioneer battalion near Ypres, making and repairing roads, tracks, dumps, camps and other structures, frequently in or in front of "the line," rarely enjoying a complete rest or freedom from shelling. Without the satisfaction of retaliation, it suffered casualties and a severe strain on its spirits. But not only did its morale remain high, but a number of its members earned rewards for gallantry and good work. For example, in the middle of October, when a shell pitched on a road among a working party under his command, causing several casualties, Captain N. Whittles withdrew the party to a safer place, went back with stretcher-bearers to remove the wounded and, when the shelling died down, led his men forward again and finished his task. He received the Military Cross. Company Serjeant-Major A. P. West was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his coolness and skill, which inspired such confidence in his men when the Germans opened a very accurate fire with heavy guns on the road on which they were working that he was able to withdraw them in perfect order and steadiness. At about the same time, Lance-Corporal E. J. Foreman, Privates M. Bergin, J. Horridge and E. Leech won the Military Medal, and Leech a bar to it, for bravery in attending to wounded under very heavy shelling. In November, Serjeant C. Hickinbotham and Corporal W. Jones were awarded the Military Medal for gallant devotion to duty: ordered to complete their tasks at all costs, they stuck to them under severe and accurate shell fire until compelled to desist. Towards the end of the month, a wireless station in the battalion area was blown in by shells. Second-Lieutenant D. M. Macfarlane promptly organized a rescue party under Corporal G. Hird from his platoon, which was in nearby dug-outs; and in spite of heavy shelling they succeeded in digging out six wounded men of the wireless detachment from the concrete debris and getting them safely back to a dressing station. Macfarlane was awarded the Military Cross and Hird the Military Medal.

The Battle of Cambrai

"CAMBRAI, 1917"

1st and 2nd 5th Battalions

The Attack

1st Battalion

The Landing at Gallipoli on 25th April, 1915, was a classic example of one kind of warfare. The Battle of Cambrai, which opened on 20th November, 1917, was the prototype of another. Unlike as these two operations were in most respects, they had in common one feature which may perhaps be called the naval form of support—applied in the one case by the Royal Navy through its command of the sea approaches to the objective and through the guns of its moving ships, and in the other by a new branch of the Army using, for the first time on a large scale (and as a final test of the value of the tanks), naval tactics to secure command of the land and to give covering fire to the attackers from its moving tanks.

1st Bn. The 1st Battalion took part in both these historic events.

After its attack near Langemarck on 9th October, the battalion went to a camp not far from Proven and was employed on road-making till the 16th, when it moved by train to Blaireville, near Arras. Here it spent a month in refitting and in careful and thorough training. Though no hint was given of the scene of the fighting which was being practised, it so happened that the country near Blaireville was so like that near Cambrai that very realistic rehearsals could be held. Towards the end of the month the unit began one of the most strenuous and physically trying experiences which fell to its lot throughout the war. It went by train from Boisleux-au-Mont at 10.28 p.m. on 17th November and arrived at Péronne at 5 a.m. on the following morning. It marched thence to a camp at Haut-Allaines and at 5 p.m. the same day on to Equancourt. These days were foggy, which made approach marches by day possible and materially helped to preserve the secrecy necessary for success. The day of 19th November was devoted to resting in preparation for the final march to the battle-field.

The essence of the plan for 20th November was surprise, which was to be attained by dispensing with the lengthy preliminary bombardment usually arranged and by sending some 380 tanks, the largest number yet used, immediately in front of the infantry to perform the functions of wire-cutting and the suppression of hostile machine guns which had hitherto been carried out by artillery. It was intended by this means to make a breach in the Hindenburg Line through which cavalry could be passed in order to cut off most of the German troops before Cambrai. The 29th Division was to be in reserve during the first phase, in which other divisions on the III Corps front were to capture the Hindenburg Line and its support line which lay about a mile north-east of it. The 29th were then to

pass through, capture Masnières, Marcoing and the Bois des Neuf (about three-quarters of a mile north-west of Marcoing), cross the St. Quentin Canal and occupy part of a system of trenches north of those villages which was known as the Beaurevoir Line. It would then be the turn of the cavalry. The 29th Division was attacking with all its three brigades in line, the task of the 86th Infantry Brigade, on the left, being to capture and consolidate a position running from the canal close to Marcoing to Noyelles-sur-l'Escaut.

As the time for its advance depended on the capture of the first two positions by the other divisions, the signal for movement was to be the Middlesex Regiment's regimental call, followed by the "Advance," sounded on the bugle. Each battalion was to repeat the order, using its own call. The four battalions of the brigade were to advance in diamond formation, the 16th Middlesex Regiment being at the point and the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers (Major T. Slingsby, M.C., in temporary command) at the rear, with seven hundred yards separating the nearest platoons of the two units. The object of this method of advance was to ensure that, if the leading battalion was held up, the flank units could still move straight forward and turn the enemy's position, a system which proved most effective on this occasion. Within each battalion, the companies were similarly disposed and for the same reasons. The 1st Battalion was responsible for the complete mopping-up of Marcoing to the west of the River Escaut, after which the whole battalion was to dig in west of that place and be in brigade reserve, ready to counter-attack if required. "B" (Captain C. L. Rougier) and "D" (Captain T. Newton M.C.) Companies were detailed for the mopping-up task.

At 11.30 p.m. on 19th November the battalion marched off through Fins to the brigade assembly point, which it reached at 5.30 a.m., after a long halt at about 1 a.m. and other delays caused by the moving up of tanks. Companies then shook out into artillery formation and waited for zero. The morning was very misty and it was impossible to see more than a hundred yards ; but arrangements had been made to march on a compass bearing of 41 degrees magnetic. At 6.10 a.m., the tanks emerged from their hiding places and moved forward. Ten minutes later, a short bombardment of a great number of guns, whose presence had been skilfully concealed, opened on the enemy's lines ; and the battalion began to advance across country. The operation was carried out with entire precision and steadiness without any interference by the enemy's artillery ; and at 7.30 a.m. the battalion had its first halt, on the sunken road between Villers-Plouich and Beaucamp, where equipment was taken off and hot bacon and tea were served out. The first phase of the battle had been a complete success. The Germans had been totally surprised and the Hindenburg Line on the frontage of attack had been captured very quickly without much opposition. In consequence, large numbers of prisoners began to come past the battalion, which was naturally encouraged by the sight.

Orders for a further advance, to the Plouich line of the old British

front trenches, were received at 10 a.m. And at 10.30 a.m. the long-awaited "Advance" was heard on the bugle. The battalion moved forward with companies and platoons in diamond formation in a north-north-easterly direction along the western side of the Couillet valley leading from Villers-Plouich to Marcoing and thence towards the Bois des Neuf. This advance also was carried out with great steadiness, and, as the ground had been only slightly cut up by shell fire and as the tanks had made many gaps in the thick wire of the Hindenburg Line—so thick and strong that millions of pounds' worth of shells and several weeks of bombardment would have been needed to demolish it—the going was good and direction easily maintained. At 11 a.m. the battalion crossed the Hindenburg Line and at 11.30 a.m. the Hindenburg Support Line. As it passed Ribécourt, tanks could be seen engaged on the fringe of a wood to the north of the village and the German machine-gun and rifle fire which was coming from that quarter was soon extinguished. When "A" Company, in the van of the battalion, reached the western outskirts of Marcoing, barely a shot was to be heard.

"B" and "D" Companies at once set about their task of searching and clearing the village, while "C" Company were sent to help the King's Own Scottish Borderers in a similar duty. "B" and "D" met but little opposition, though they had to dispose of a number of Germans whom they found in the streets and in the houses. Some idea can be gained of the extent of the surprise of which the enemy were victims from the fact that Captain T. Newton, M.C., discovered two Germans sitting at a table drinking. As their reply to his call to surrender was a dive for their rifles which were leaning against the wall, he summarily ended their activities with his revolver. Meanwhile, Private D. Doherty, one of the battalion scouts, had seen a German machine gun open fire on the right of the village. He worked his way towards it and rushed it single-handed, killing four of the crew and seizing the gun. His courageous act unquestionably saved the battalion many casualties. As soon as the village was clear of Germans, the two companies rejoined the rest of the battalion, which up to now had suffered its only two casualties of the day, which were two men wounded by German snipers lying hidden in long grass west of Marcoing and only firing when the leading waves had passed them. The time was then 1 p.m.

The battalion was disposed with its headquarters, "A" and "C" Companies on a sunken road leading west from Marcoing towards Flesquières, with "B" and "D" in support south of the road. This arrangement had to be altered a little later in order to protect the left flank of the brigade; and "D" Company dug two strong points about one hundred and fifty yards west of the road leading to Bois des Neuf and a third in support of them, all facing north-west, while "B" was placed in a quarry in support of the 1st Royal Guernsey Light Infantry. By 2.30 p.m. the task of consolidation was well in hand, and the rest of the day passed uneventfully, though the battalion was able to help the 2nd Royal Fusiliers by sending up to

them a German machine gun and twelve boxes of ammunition which they had captured.

The 21st opened quietly, though the nosecap of a British 60-pounder shell by some strange mischance ricocheted into the quarry occupied by "B" Company, hit a bag full of rifle grenades and exploded one, with the result that five men were wounded. At 11 a.m. orders were received that one company was to be sent to work with a company of the 2nd Royal Fusiliers in support of the cavalry who were co-operating in a tank attack on Cantaing, about a mile and three-quarters north of Marcoing. "A" Company moved off at 12 noon under Lieutenant H. W. Milligan for this task. One platoon under Second-Lieutenant A. S. Davison was at once sent to help the cavalry to get possession of some lock gates north of Noyelles; and the remaining two platoons of the company moved towards Noyelles, which was to act as the deploying point for the cavalry before they attempted to cut off the enemy east of Cantaing as these were driven out by the tanks, while the infantry moved up in support and formed a defensive screen, pushing forward strong patrols as the cavalry advanced. This plan was based on the assumption that Noyelles was clear of enemy, as had been reported. But when "A" Company arrived there, accompanied by the battalion intelligence officer, Lieutenant J. E. Cotgrave, who had come to establish a forward liaison post at the southern end of Noyelles, it found that the Germans were holding the village in force. Milligan decided to try to make his way through and led his two platoons forward. But the German resistance was too strong for him and he could make very little progress. Cotgrave sent back a message asking for the help of the tanks and two of them arrived at 2.30 p.m. Followed by Milligan's men, they succeeded in dislodging the enemy; and by 4 p.m. the village had been cleared right up to the River Escaut, though unfortunately Milligan and Second-Lieutenant W. Griffiths were killed and about twenty-five other ranks were killed and wounded in the process. On the other hand, this minor action succeeded in liberating 150 civilians, whose joy at being taken away towards their own people in freedom after three years of German occupation was pathetic to see.

That night the battalion was relieved by the 1st King's Shropshire Light Infantry and the 8th Bedfordshire Regiment and moved to cellars and the vault of the church in Marcoing, which was still receiving very little shelling from the enemy—a different state of affairs to that of ten days later. During these two days, the battalion's casualties had been 2 officers and 5 other ranks killed, 2 officers and 37 other ranks wounded and one man missing. Private D. Doherty, to whom these comparatively light casualties were largely due, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

The Dummy Attack

2nd/5th Battalion

2ND/5TH BN.

The precise extent of the main assault was disguised by the launching of dummy attacks on the two flanks. The 2nd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O.) took part in the southern distraction and had more hard fighting than many of the units in the real thing.

After a year's service in the Ypres Salient, ending with the battle which began on 20th September, the 2nd/5th went by train to Bapaume, whence it marched to Ytres for a short period of rest and re-equipment. It moved up early in October and spent the rest of the month in routine work in and out of a sector of the line north-east of Lempire and close to the St. Quentin Canal. The front, the scene of activities by the 17th, 18th and 20th Battalions a few months before, consisted of a series of strongly made and heavily wired posts, loosely linked by a trench system which was not continuous. The German trenches constituted the outposts of the Hindenburg Line and were as far as 1,000 yards from the British positions in some places. On the whole, the district was peaceful, but near Lempire there had been raids and fighting at Gillemont Farm, 1,500 yards west of Bony, and at a small heart-shaped eminence called the Knoll, about the same distance south-west of Vendhuille. These places continued to be bones of contention; and when the 55th Division was ordered to attack on 20th November, 1917, with the primary object of distracting attention from the main attack and of preventing the enemy from moving any troops to deal with it, it was decided that they should be captured and held, if (but only if) this could be done without serious loss. The units taking part in the attack did not know that their attack was only subsidiary and that it was not intended to press it in the face of strong opposition.

The 2nd/5th Battalion spent some days at Tincourt practising attacks on these two points and moved back into the line on 19th November. As the 55th Division was holding the very wide frontage of 8,000 yards, only one brigade (the 164th) could be made available for the attack. Its orders therefore were to concentrate on taking Gillemont Farm and the Knoll but to exploit any successes by means of bombing attacks outwards from both places in the hope of being able to link them up in a new and more advanced line. The 2nd/5th Battalion was the left of the three attacking battalions of the brigade, with the Liverpool Irish on its right. To it was allotted the Knoll as its objective. The German trenches at this point were on the reverse slope of the hill, as was so often the case in the Hindenburg Line. They formed a slight salient at the Knoll, and in the northern arm of it the foremost position was called "Tiger Trench," with "Nameless Trench" and "Lion Trench" a short distance behind it. The northward continuation of Tiger Trench was known as "Tombois Trench," and of Lion Trench "Tombois

Support." Joining the northern ends of the two "Tombois" lines was a communication trench called "Beel Avenue" which led to the outskirts of Vendhuille village. The battalion's attack was organized in three waves. The first, consisting of "B" Company (Second-Lieutenant E. P. Bowell, a former London Metropolitan policeman) on the right and "A" Company (Second-Lieutenant R. A. Macfie) on the left, was to capture Tiger Trench. The second, drawn from the same companies, was to push straight on and take Nameless Trench, Lion Trench and Tombois Support. The third comprised "C" (Captain K. T. Blamey) and "D" (Second-Lieutenant A. J. E. Campbell) Companies and was to swing to the left, take Tombois Trench and bomb along Beel Avenue and neighbouring trenches. Blamey was made responsible for co-ordinating the action of both companies in the third wave.

On the night before the attack, Serjeant Y. Saxton, the serjeant cook, made up his mind that hot food should reach the troops early and planned to send tea up to the Knoll while consolidation was in progress. With this end in view, he on his own initiative took two of his "cookers" out after dark into a hollow in No Man's Land where they would not be seen from the German lines in daylight, and when the attack was launched prepared food within half a mile of the objective and some distance in front of the British lines!

The attack on Gillemont Farm began at 6.20 a.m. on 20th November—at the same time as the main attack farther north. The German barrage came down in reply a few minutes later, but left the 2nd/5th Battalion's front almost untouched. At 6.44 a.m. the battalion began its advance, under a barrage of shells and of flank protection on its left consisting of 170 smoke bombs and 335 thermite bombs discharged from mortars. A few shells came over and caused some disorganization as the leading waves were making their way through their own wire, one 4.2-inch shell scoring a direct hit on a Lewis-gun team and destroying it and its weapon. Another shell landed at the entrance to the battalion headquarters dug-out and killed the intelligence officer, Second-Lieutenant J. B. Lupton, who was just emerging in order to go to an observation post.

Once clear of the wire, the companies advanced steadily and in perfect formation. The first few hundred yards of the advance lay partly across dead ground and casualties were few. But on coming up the western slope of the Knoll, the waves were exposed to the fire of German machine guns and lost about seventy men. Nevertheless at 7 a.m. an entry was made into the enemy's trenches a little to the north of the point of the salient. They were found to have been evacuated except for a few small parties, who were promptly killed, but to have been badly knocked about by shell fire. The front line was also seen to be commanded by the support line—Nameless Trench, Lion Trench, and Tombois Support. While the troops were moving into and along Tiger Trench, the Germans put down a barrage of rifle grenades which continued during the whole time that the battalion was in the enemy's lines. It was extremely

accurate and not only destroyed at least two Lewis guns but caused so many casualties in Tiger Trench that movement along it was very difficult. As arranged, parties at once began to bomb outwards on both flanks. The party which went to the left encountered Germans after going about a hundred yards along Tiger Trench. Seven of the enemy surrendered, but four of them refused to go over the top of the trench towards the British lines and were killed. The other three left the trench but, as they threw stick bombs back into it, they too were shot.

In the meanwhile, Second-Lieutenant W. H. Wild, of "A" Company, who was consolidating his position in Tiger Trench, realizing that the German support trenches commanded it, asked Blamey if he should take some men forward and attack them. On Blamey's orders he did so, captured part of Nameless Trench and established a Lewis gun in it under heavy fire. Second-Lieutenant J. F. Morrison, also of "A" Company, was beginning his consolidation when he was bombed from his flank. He at once jumped out of the trench and dispersed the attackers with his revolver. He resumed his task and established a block in the trench from which he kept back all further attempts. Having made his part of Tiger Trench secure, he sent back a most useful report to battalion headquarters and finally brought cross fire to bear on the German trenches to his left, thereby rendering very valuable help to the parties which were working forward along Tombois Trench.

Farther within the German position, Second-Lieutenant R. L. Addie had led his platoon into Beel Avenue and established a block in the trench. But as casualties had been heavy and the troops on the right appeared to have been unable to come forward, Blamey decided not to attempt any further progress in this direction, though he ordered Machie to capture the remainder of Nameless Trench at all costs, as the fire coming from it was a matter of serious concern to the occupants of Tiger Trench. Other bombing parties also met with very strong opposition and were with difficulty managing to hold posts about fifty yards forward of Tiger Trench. It was evident that, unless some further impression was made on Nameless Trench, no further progress could be made. Machie accordingly collected a few men and went over the open to attack that position. His party had hardly jumped down into it when a body of between twenty and thirty Germans came over the open from the trench just beyond and threw stick bombs at them. Rifle and Lewis-gun fire was at once opened on the enemy, but Machie's party suffered about eight casualties and was left dangerously weak.

At about 7.30 a.m. the German artillery became very active and a heavy barrage came down on the British front line and continued for some time. At the same time the various bombing parties which had succeeded in penetrating several hundred yards along the enemy's lines to the left were in a precarious position, one having by this time only one unwounded man left as the result of repeated German onslaughts with bombs. Some of the enemy succeeded in

attacking Addie's party in Beel Avenue from its left flank, killing the officer and killing or capturing the remainder with the exception of two men who escaped. The Liverpool Irish on the right had been confronted with uncut wire and had been therefore unable to come up on the 2nd/5th Battalion's right, which consequently was in the air. A determined effort was made to make some progress in this direction, but very strong opposition was encountered and the company commander (Bowell) was killed. Blamey was now the only company commander left. Three times, owing to the losses, he was compelled to give up ground won and try to consolidate a shorter line; but the casualties mounted up. Shortly after 7.30 a.m., Blamey received a report that the Irish were withdrawing: the same information was received at battalion headquarters at 7.52 a.m. from a signaller who had observed the movement; and the adjutant (Captain A. H. G. Griggs, M.C.) went forward with a view to collecting spare men and pushing on. Blamey decided to make another attempt to clear the trenches on his left front and if possible to gain possession of the vital Nameless Trench, without which his hold on even Tiger Trench would be impossible in the end. The attack was made, but it was unsuccessful and costly.

Blamey came to the conclusion that he must either withdraw or lose the few men he had left, as he was overlooked from the front, both his flanks were exposed and the enemy's rifle grenades continued to arrive accurately. Accordingly at about 8.25 a.m. he decided to withdraw. He ordered two Lewis-gun teams to act as a rearguard while he withdrew the survivors down a communication trench towards the original line. One of the guns was manned by Serjeant J. Singleton, who had previously displayed great gallantry in handling it; he used it to great effect at this stage and, when his turn came to retire, he helped to bring back a wounded man. A touch of comedy relieved the strain of these anxious moments. As soon as the withdrawal was ordered, the noble Saxton realized that his "cookers" would not only not be wanted where they were but were in considerable risk of capture if the enemy should counter-attack. He sent back for the horses to pull them to safety but, in case they were too late, fastened slabs of guncotton to the wheels, determined to destroy his engines rather than suffer the dishonour of allowing them to fall into German hands. Fortunately, the teams arrived just in time.

By 9.20 a.m. the original front line had been reoccupied and the last of the wounded brought in. Major-General H. S. Jeudwine, C.B., commanding the 55th Division, ordered that no further attacks should be made and came up himself to battalion headquarters to express his appreciation of what had been done. Besides those already mentioned, many officers and other ranks performed brave deeds on 20th November. Foremost was Private F. Coker who, although one of his feet had been blown off by a German bomb soon after he reached Tiger Trench, refused to leave the line and went on with the work of consolidation for an hour. When a stretcher

bearer came to him to offer to take him down to the aid post, he refused to go and pointed to more serious cases. It was only when Blamey gave him a direct order that he finally left the German trenches, having given much encouragement to those around him by his wonderful cheerfulness and pluck. Two officers, Lieutenant A. C. Altham and Second-Lieutenant E. B. Allan, also remained at duty for a long time after being wounded, Allan bandaging several wounded men of his company and, like Coker, refusing to go to the aid post till ordered to do so. The decorations awarded to the battalion were :—

Military Cross

Lieutenant A. C. Altham.
Second-Lieutenant E. B. Allan.
Second-Lieutenant J. F. Morrison.
Second-Lieutenant W. H. Wild.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Private F. Coker.

Military Medal

Serjeant Y. Saxton.
Serjeant J. Singleton.
Corporal W. H. Hartley.
Lance-Corporal J. McGrady.
Lance-Corporal E. Sykes.
Private J. W. Birtwistle.
Private J. A. Crossley.
Private G. Lord.
Private P. Losh.
Private W. T. Smith.
Private F. Wrigley.

The battalion's losses had been 4 officers and 23 other ranks killed, 6 officers and 82 other ranks wounded (including Captain K. T. Blamey, who, however, remained at duty) and 3 officers and 103 other ranks missing.

An Interlude

1st Bn. The 1st Battalion was not allowed to enjoy a very long rest, for it moved back to Masnières on the afternoon of 22nd November and relieved two battalions of the 88th Infantry Brigade in the sector which lay between the roads which ran north from Masnières to Cambrai and to Rumilly, "B" and "C" Companies being in the front line. The night was spent in improving the latter and in digging a communication trench to it from the supporting positions, which were situated in a quarry. It was decided to try to seize the crest which lay in front of the battalion by means of "peaceful penetration" in order to deprive the enemy of the observation which it gave him. "B," "C" and "D" Companies were ordered to advance, each with a strong patrol leading. At 11 p.m. on 23rd November they moved forward ; but it at once became obvious that the Germans were holding the crest in force and that they were on the alert. For a hunting horn was sounded in their lines and heavy machine-gun and rifle fire was opened. "B" and "D" Companies could make no progress at all. "C" managed to get within forty yards of the enemy's line, but withdrew when it was evident that the Germans were too strong, about twenty-five casualties being suffered in so doing. Second-Lieutenant J. Cassidy fearlessly exposed himself in rallying his men and organizing their orderly withdrawal. He

carried back all the wounded and brought in a badly wounded officer, in spite of being attacked by an enemy party which he drove off with his revolver. Company Serjeant-Major V. C. D. Froude, M.M., also did good work in rallying his men and organizing a party with which he held a strong point against a counter-attack. By midnight all three companies were back in their original places. But the venture had not been entirely in vain, as it had procured much valuable information as to the strength and dispositions of the enemy. Cassidy was awarded the Military Cross and Froude the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

The battalion was relieved at 5 p.m. on 24th November and withdrew to cellars and other shelters in Masnières, with the exception of "A" Company, which occupied three strong points covering the right flank of the brigade's position to the north-east of the village.

The Riposte

Two days later, however, the 1st Battalion (Major T. Slingsby, M.C., in temporary command) was back in the line again, though this time it took over a sector farther to the east—between the Masnières–Rumilly and the Masnières–Crèvecoeur roads—with "A," "B" and "C" Companies in the line and "D" in support. The next two days passed quietly, but on the night of 28th/29th November the Germans shelled Masnières very heavily, causing some casualties. This was not, however, allowed to interfere with the work of making the battalion's line almost continuous and digging communication trenches to it. The daytime of the 29th November was also quiet, but again during the night the British battery positions were heavily shelled. 1ST BN.

This activity on the part of the German artillery was not without method. During the last few days of the month it had been noticed that the German guns were registering on a number of new targets, and it was also evident that a considerable number of new batteries were registering on important places of which the old batteries knew the range. Much activity was noticeable behind the line and hostile aircraft were very active. In short, it was evident that the Germans were planning a counter-attack.

It came on 30th November, a misty morning. After a night of severe gas shelling of batteries and the forward area, a very heavy barrage fell at 7 a.m. on Masnières and on the front of the division on the right, and lasted for three-quarters of an hour. With it came Richthofen's "circus" of some two dozen aeroplanes of various brilliant colours which signalled to the German artillery and machine-gunned the trenches and streets of Masnières, untouched by the hail of bullets sent up at them. All telephone lines were cut. At about 8 a.m. a powerful infantry attack was launched from the east, which penetrated so far behind the line which the 1st Battalion held at Masnières that the headquarters of the 29th Division at Gouzeacourt, six miles behind its own front line and two and a half

miles from the nearest part of the line, were nearly captured. The battalion itself could see masses of Germans, the rear waves led by officers on horseback, moving in behind them towards Les Rues Vertes, on the outskirts of Masnières and on the south side of the canal. The enemy were kept at a distance from the bridges over the canal by machine guns and by two Lewis guns which fired into their flank from battalion headquarters. They were finally driven out of the Les Rues Vertes by squads of men organized by Captain R. Gee, M.C., Royal Fusiliers, the Staff Captain of the 86th Infantry Brigade, whose deeds earned for him the Victoria Cross.

An equally powerful attack developed against the battalion's front, down the road leading from Cambrai to Masnières. Its target was chiefly "C" Company (Captain T. Newton, M.C.), but although the attempt was renewed five or six times, the waves never managed to approach nearer than one hundred yards to the British line. Each time they were driven back with great loss by rifle, Lewis-gun, machine-gun and trench-mortar fire. A gap did, however, occur in part of the line; but it was filled by a small party of signallers and orderlies led forward by Captain C. E. Loseby who, although wounded, stayed with his men until the position was secure. Even after the repulse of this frontal attack, the situation remained very critical, as the Germans were still on the edge of Les Rues Vertes and it seemed as if the 86th Brigade might be cut off. Towards evening, however, more elbow room was secured south of the canal to the east and south of it towards Marcoing. Nevertheless the battalion stood to arms throughout the night, which proved to be quiet.

The next day, 1st December, opened with a severe and accurate bombardment of the battalion's trenches by artillery and trench mortars, which caused some casualties. But it was not until the afternoon that any further assault developed on this part of the front. At 3 p.m. the Germans put down a very heavy barrage on the canal bank; and at about 4.15 p.m. they attacked on both sides of the canal—towards Les Rues Vertes on the south and towards a sugar factory, which lay to the east of Masnières, on the north. The assault was so strong that at one time the enemy held almost the whole of Les Rues Vertes and most of the south bank of the canal to the east of it, though they were partially dislodged later. But when the Brigade Commander, Brigadier-General G. R. H. Cheape, M.C., came forward to find out what was happening, he found (as he put it later) that the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers were calm and determined to hang on at all costs. Shortly afterwards he heard that the Germans were trying to cross the canal from south to north by the footway over some lock gates to the south of the sugar factory. Rougier was therefore ordered to send a platoon of "B" Company to reinforce the 16th Middlesex Regiment, who were already heavily engaged near that building. He personally supervised the organization of a defensive position by this platoon after a reconnaissance at considerable risk, and was himself seriously wounded in so doing.

Official Photograph

Battalion of Lancashire Fusiliers on march in

It is believed that the battalion show

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n snow near Cambrai, 21st December, 1917.

wn is the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers.

By now the troops on the north side of the canal in front of Masnières were in a dangerous salient and were hemmed in on three sides with only a narrow channel connecting them with the rest of the division. They were very exhausted after two days of hard fighting and they had previously spent twelve days in unusually heavy digging of new defences after the attack on 20th November. The Divisional Commander therefore recommended that the line should be withdrawn to the south of the canal and of Masnières. At about 5 p.m. the orders were issued for this operation to be carried out. The troops on the south bank of the canal were to retire first, followed by the 16th Middlesex, who were holding the right of the line north of it. Finally the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers were to leave, platoons withdrawing in succession from the right. In spite of a bright and unhelpful moon, this very delicate movement was effected without a hitch and without detection by the enemy. All the wounded were evacuated. Every man brought out with him 170 rounds of rifle ammunition and two bombs. The ammunition which could not be carried was buried or dumped in the canal. Barricades had been made on the roads leading from Masnières towards the enemy on the north of the canal; these were manned by parties from battalion headquarters under Major Slingsby till the rest of the battalion had passed through. Then they too marched away, word being sent to the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers on the left that responsibility for the line of the canal at this point had now been passed to them. The withdrawal from Masnières was complete by 1.30 a.m. on 2nd December and the battalion marched back to the Hindenburg Line and later to Ribécourt. Those who were not asleep smiled as they heard the Germans heavily shelling the deserted village of Masnières later in the day before they attacked it once more from the east and from the north.

The warmest congratulations poured in on the 86th Brigade for its deeds at Masnières from the Commander of the III Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir W. P. Pulteney, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., and from the Fourth Army Commander, General Hon. Sir Julian Byng, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O. A message was also received from the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, in which he said: "Their gallant defence of Masnières throughout two days of almost continuous fighting has had the most important results upon the course of the battle and is worthy of the best traditions of the British Army."

Captains C. E. Loseby and C. L. Rougier were awarded the Military Cross for their gallant and able conduct during this period.

Although the left of the 55th Division was very roughly handled on 30th November, the 2nd/5th Battalion was not called upon to take any other share in dealing with the German counter-attack than to take up a defensive position in front of Malassise Farm, nine hundred yards south-east of Epéhy, under the orders of the 165th Infantry Brigade, in readiness to stop any further penetration by the enemy. 2ND/5TH BN.

More Gleanings

9TH BN. When it was last mentioned, the 9th Battalion had moved to the Lens district in October, 1917. It spent a winter of routine there, but one incident should be recorded. It went into the line at Loos on 10th November for a normal spell. On the night of 22nd/23rd November, a patrol visited a brickstack which lay a short distance in front of the trenches. Finding it empty, two men, Private Muncaster and Private Reid, of "W" Company, established themselves in it as observers and remained there from 8.30 p.m. on 22nd till 3 p.m. on 23rd. They used the hours of darkness to make several loopholes in the stack and to turn their hiding place into a really good observation post which was much used subsequently, while they spent the day in watching the enemy's activities and noting a great deal of valuable information. They were congratulated by the I Corps Commander.

11TH BN. Three days later, and a few miles farther north, the 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. C. de R. Martin, D.S.O., M.C., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) was involved in a patrol affair. The battalion was in the line near Cambrin, close to the La Bassée Canal, and was ordered to send out patrols on 26th November, under cover of gas and smoke, to surprise enemy posts opposite to them and to take prisoners for the purposes of identification. Gas was discharged from projectors at 8 p.m. At 8.2 p.m. a patrol consisting of Second-Lieutenant W. Stelfox, Second-Lieutenant H. J. Lockley and 20 N.C.Os. and men left its trenches and advanced towards some craters, known as Railway Craters, which lay in front of the German trenches. The enemy, put on his guard by the gas, opened artillery and machine gun fire. The craters were found to be unoccupied, but the main trenches were strongly manned. As the party tried to cross the German wire, it was spotted and many bombs were thrown at it. At least three machine guns opened fire from the flanks, while rifle fire came from the trench close in front. The raiders took refuge in holes made by trench-mortar bombs near Railway Craters; but as a successful rush on the enemy's trenches was obviously impossible, they withdrew at 8.55 p.m. under considerable rifle and machine-gun fire.

About ten minutes after Stelfox's patrol had advanced, a similar party under Second-Lieutenant T. Wood moved direct on the German front-line trenches. For about an hour it lay within fifteen yards of them, waiting till the disturbance roused by the other attempt should have died down. When all was quiet they advanced, only to be met at once by rifle fire and bombs from many points. The party promptly dropped back into the shelter it had just left and, after waiting till 11.30 p.m. under persistent fire, made its way back to its own lines, taking with it two men who had been wounded.

There seems little doubt that the gas discharged from projectors fell on the German support trenches and that the occupants in the front line were not only fully warned but able to dispense with gas masks and so handle their weapons the more accurately.

Equally unlucky was the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. L. Torrens, D.S.O.) in its last tour of duty near Millers Houses, close to Poelcappelle and the meeting point of the 1st and 2nd Battalions on 9th October. Late on 29th November, Lieutenant J. H. Jobling took out a fighting patrol consisting of Second-Lieutenant W. G. Bell and fourteen men of "B" Company (Captain D. L. Waghorn, D.C.M.) with the object of getting a prisoner. The party had to negotiate many shell holes filled with water. But it had very nearly succeeded in its mission of penetrating the enemy's forward defences when fire was opened. Jobling was killed and Bell wounded and taken prisoner; several men were hit. The patrol was split up. A lively fight followed, but the party was forced to withdraw, some of its members not returning till after dawn and then utterly exhausted and soaked to the skin from lying on the wet ground. For their conduct on this occasion, particularly when the party had been deprived of its leaders, Military Medals were awarded to Corporal E. Dainty, Corporal J. Smith and Private J. Carter. 10TH BN.

The Attack at Westroosebeke
2nd December, 1917

15th Battalion

It has been difficult to find any reason why the operation which is about to be described ever took place. As has been noted, the Third Battle of Ypres came to an official end on 10th November, 1917. The Commander-in-Chief in his despatch stated that "only such minor enterprises were undertaken by the British forces during the winter months as were essential to keep us informed regarding the dispositions and intentions of the German forces opposed to us. Special attention was directed to disposing our forces in such manner as would best promote economy in men and reduce casualties." Nevertheless the 32nd Division was informed early in November that it would move into the line near Bellevue, one mile west of Passchendaele, and would be required to attack northwards towards Westroosebeke in order to improve the position in that area. The sector from which the assault was to be launched was taken over on 24th November and was found to consist mainly of mud which was impassable except over duckboard tracks. Such of these as existed were not long enough to enable preparations for an attack to be made and they had to be extended and supplemented by the Royal Engineers. The area which had to be used for assembly before the assault was in full view of the enemy and could only be approached in the hours of darkness. This made it necessary that the operation should take place by night or at dawn. As so many attacks had just previously taken place at dawn, the Divisional Commander, Major-General C. D. Shute, C.B., C.M.G., decided to aim at surprise through a night operation. Even with the additional tracks which were made, the approach march was difficult as about seven miles had to be covered in single file and darkness along routes which had been

accurately registered by the German artillery. These and other factors complicated the problem of fixing zero, which was eventually timed for 1.55 a.m. on 2nd December. The positions held by the enemy presented no well-defined line as an objective; and each unit and company was given an area to deal with. There was to be no creeping barrage, partly so as not to alarm the Germans and partly because it was almost impossible to arrange one as the guns were so sited that they could only fire from west to east, whereas the direction of the attack was from south to north. The enemy's first line of posts was to be rushed with the bayonet and without artillery support for the first eight minutes. After that time, it was expected that surprise would no longer be possible and a barrage was to be put down on the German support positions.

15TH BN.

The attack was to take place on a frontage of five battalions, the 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. K. Utterson, D.S.O., Dorsetshire Regiment) being lent to the 97th Infantry Brigade for the occasion to act as the left flank guard. The battalion's frontage in the assembly area was four hundred and fifty yards, but as it had to pivot on its left and to link the original line with the position gained by the rest of the brigade, its holding on the objective would measure seven hundred yards. The orders provided that "A" (Lieutenant W. J. Brockman), "B" (Captain R. F. Greenhill) and "C" (Lieutenant G. H. Smith, D.C.M.) Companies should advance to their allotted area in the objective, called the "Red Line," and that "D" Company (Captain L. C. Mandleberg) should move in rear of "A" Company and be prepared to support any of the leading companies if they should need help to enable them to attain their objective. If its services were not used in that capacity, "D" was to consolidate in depth when the "Red Line" had been taken.

The battalion went up to the line late on 30th November. The march was long and tiring, but was made easier by the fact that the routes from the end of the duck-board tracks had been marked by tapes and by wire mounted on screw pickets. During the same night the assembly area was marked out with wire by Second-Lieutenant J. S. Scrivener and its position checked by a compass in daylight. On the night of 1st/2nd December the wire was replaced with tape and the flank of each platoon's position was marked with a white disc. In addition, boards were put up in each company's area on which were written in luminous paint the compass bearing and the distance to the objective. Thanks to this careful preparation, the assembly of platoons was carried out without a hitch and with few casualties.

At 1.55 a.m. on 2nd December the attack was launched. Prisoners said afterwards that it came as a complete surprise to them and that their orders were to hold their front line at all costs. As General Shute expected, the attackers had seven precious minutes without enemy fire. For it was not till 2.2 a.m. that the German machine guns opened fire and 2.7 a.m. before their guns put down their barrage. The latter was not severe, but the machine guns, a large

number of which seemed to have been placed in forward positions as if an attack had been expected, did much damage. The British barrage began at 2.3 a.m., as arranged, but it was not able to silence the enemy fire. "A" Company, keeping in touch with the 17th Highland Light Infantry on its right, soon felt the force of it. Before long all the officers and senior N.C.Os. had been killed or wounded. The survivors struggled on, but suffered greatly and became very scattered, only about twenty N.C.Os. and men remaining in any organized form. "B" and "C" Companies met with less opposition and were soon in their appointed places guarding the left flank. Two platoons of "D" Company under Second-Lieutenants J. Hurst and J. Pollitt were sent forward to help "A" Company and eventually succeeded in filling the gap which had occurred and in establishing themselves firmly on the objective. Scrivener and his batman, Private R. H. Poole, showed the greatest gallantry; they attacked and captured a "pill-box" containing a machine gun. Just afterwards Scrivener was killed as he neared his objective. Soon after 5 a.m. the battalion had gained the whole of its share of the "Red Line" and was busily engaged in consolidating it.

Things had not gone so well on the right. The 17th Highland Light Infantry had been held up by the German machine-gun fire and there was a risk of a dangerous gap occurring between the 15th Lancashire Fusiliers and the 11th Border Regiment, who stood next in order beyond the Highland Light Infantry. At 5.30 a.m. orders were issued by the brigadier that the units on each side of the gap should work inwards and try to join hands across it. This proved to be impossible owing to continued machine-gun fire; and by 11.15 a.m. the 15th Battalion had had to bend its right flank back somewhat, so as to establish touch with the Highland Light Infantry and thus prevent enemy penetration. This new line was firmly held in spite of a vigorously delivered German counter-attack which opened at 4.10 p.m. and which succeeded in pushing back the greater part of the brigade, by now sorely depleted, short of leaders and very weary. But the 15th Battalion had the satisfaction of handing over its winnings intact to the 2nd Manchester Regiment at midnight on 3rd/4th December, having lost 2 officers and 13 other ranks killed, 5 officers and 63 other ranks wounded and 17 men missing.

Much individual good work had contributed to the battalion's achievement. The Military Medal was awarded to two runners, Privates H. V. Atkinson and G. Beardsall, for gallantry in carrying messages throughout the operations; to Corporal J. W. Horton for bringing back a wounded officer and later organizing the supply of rations; and to Private R. H. Poole for his splendid work described above. A signaller, Private A. Bradburn, received the Belgian Croix de Guerre for repairing wires under fire during this action.

CHAPTER XIII

1918 UP TO THE END OF THE GERMAN ADVANCE ASTRIDE THE RIVER SOMME

"FIRST SOMME, 1918," "ST. QUENTIN," "ROSIÈRES," "FIRST BAPAUME, 1918," "FIRST ARRAS, 1918," "ANCRE, 1918"

(Maps 1 & 9)

1st, 2nd, 1st/5th, 2nd/5th, 3rd/5th, 1st/6th, 2nd/6th, 6th, 1st 7th, 2nd/7th, 1st/8th, 2nd/8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Battalions

Routine and Reorganization

The year 1918, which was to include several periods of great anxiety before its triumphal close, began quietly enough, though somewhat sadly for the Regiment, which lost several of its battalions in the early weeks.

19th Bn. Typically the New Year found the 19th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. A. Graham, D.S.O.) hard at work making and improving roads and tracks in the area won during the Third Battle of Ypres. Hardly ever was the whole battalion at rest; some part of it was always at work, week after week, month after month, its War Diary consisting largely of a list of works carried out which provide no exciting stories but which were essential to the safety and welfare of the troops behind whose lines they lay. Nevertheless the 19th was to have a period of hard fighting in 1918, as the next chapter will show. But no hint of this is to be found in January, during which the War Diary records a visit on the 6th of several members of the Parliamentary Labour Party who had come to see conditions at the Front for themselves. The next day one hundred N.C.Os. and men of high physical category were transferred to the 1st/5th, 1st/7th and 1st/8th Battalions, being replaced by the same number of men of category "B.1," most of whom had been overseas before but were not yet fully fit.

In the other battalions, trench routine alternated with periods of rest and was relieved by constant patrols and occasional raids. On 3rd and 4th January the 35th Division held an Assault-at-Arms
18th Bn. in which the 18th Battalion won the relay race and were third in the guard-mounting competition, while the 17th won the welter-weight
17th Bn. boxing and were runners-up in the light heavy-weight; the 17th also furnished the first man home in the cross-country race. On 9th January, and again between 28th and 30th January, Second-
20th Bn. Lieutenant W. W. Cotton, of the 20th Battalion, distinguished himself in valuable patrol work near Poelcappelle. Between 22nd and

28th January the 2nd/6th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel W. Wike) had several valuable pieces of work to record, Second-Lieutenants J. B. McCabe and J. D. A. Bell with two men carrying out a daylight reconnaissance which obtained useful information about the enemy's defences and organization. McCabe also took out six men, under the protection of a covering party commanded by Second-Lieutenant R. Dowson, and attempted to take a German "pill-box" near Passchendaele, but found it too strongly held to be able to achieve anything. The month ended with a raid carried out by the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. L. Torrens, D.S.O.) near Graincourt-lez-Havrincourt, in the Cambrai district. Second-Lieutenant J. M. Hamilton and twenty-two men, including two sappers, left the front line at 6.45 p.m. on 30th January and crawled three hundred yards to a position about thirty yards east of an enemy post. When Hamilton gave the signal, the party rushed this post. Five men, who had been detailed beforehand for the task, at once turned to their right and worked up the German trench with the object of establishing a block in it so as to prevent interference by the enemy. These men immediately met three Germans, who threw a number of hand-grenades. A scuffle followed in which two of the enemy were killed, one with the bayonet and the other with a bullet. In the meanwhile, the remainder of the raiders found that the post had been abandoned and engaged in a duel of rifle fire against German rifles and machine guns in the main trench. Enemy mortars then began to shell the post; and as the machine-gun fire had by now become very heavy, Hamilton decided to withdraw his party, which he did with the loss of only three men wounded. Before he withdrew he left a number of propaganda leaflets in the German trench.

2ND 6TH BN.

10TH BN.

At the end of January and the beginning of February, 1918, the Regiment suffered the loss of four battalions. For some time the manpower situation had been growing worse; and increasing difficulty was found in keeping fighting units up to strength with fit men. (As has been mentioned, men of the highest category were transferred from the less combatant units to the front line.) For this and other reasons, it was decided in January, 1918, to reduce the number of battalions in an infantry brigade from four to three and to disband one battalion in every four, using the officers and other ranks thus rendered surplus to fill the ranks of weak battalions. In consequence of this decision, the 9th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. T. P. Ward-McQuaid) was broken up on 25th February and its personnel distributed amongst the 11th, 15th and 16th Battalions, roughly 11 officers and 200 other ranks going to each. On 7th February the axe fell on the 20th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jewels, M.C.), 16 officers and 325 other ranks being posted to the 17th Battalion and 15 officers and 294 other ranks to the 18th, the transport section, consisting of Captain W. S. Wrinch and 33 N.C.Os. and men, being attached to the headquarters of the 104th Infantry Brigade and retaining its own title.

9TH BN.

20TH BN.

The battalion's War Diary closes with letters of appreciation and sympathy from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies in France, and from General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Commander of the Fourth Army. The two other battalions to disappear were the 3rd/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel T. J. Biddolph) and the 2nd/6th (Lieutenant-Colonel W. Wike). The first was disbanded and its personnel distributed amongst the 2nd/6th, 2nd/7th, 2nd/8th and 19th Battalions at a touching ceremony which took place at St. Janster Biezen on 13th February, when the Divisional Commander, Major-General N. Malcolm, D.S.O., bade the battalion farewell and paid tribute to its good work, after which the companies marched off to their new battalions to the tune of "Good-byee" played by the drums and fifes of the 2nd/8th Battalion, while the remainder of the 197th Infantry Brigade presented arms to them. (This ceremony was used as a model seventeen years later when the 7th Battalion left the 125th (Lancashire Fusiliers) Infantry Brigade in 1935 on its conversion to be the 39th (Lancashire Fusiliers) Anti-Aircraft Battalion, Royal Engineers, though the tune played on that occasion was "Auld Lang Syne.") At the same time, in order to reduce the 125th Infantry Brigade to its new establishment of three battalions, one of its four battalions had to be removed from it. But they were all first-line Territorial units and it had been decided that none of these should be disbanded. The problem was solved by transferring the 1st/6th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. de St. P. Bunbury, Yorkshire Regiment) from the 125th to the 197th Infantry Brigade, in which it was amalgamated with the 2nd/6th Battalion. The combined unit was thenceforth known as the 6th Battalion, command being assumed by Lieutenant-Colonel Bunbury.

3RD/5TH AND 2ND/6TH BNS.

1ST/6TH BN.

2ND/6TH BN.

More Patrols and Raids

Late on 1st February, 1918, Second-Lieutenant A. Elliott, of the 1st/7th Battalion, led a patrol to reconnoitre the enemy's front line near Cambrin, entered a mineshaft and explored the enemy's tunnelling system for a distance of one hundred and fifty yards, gaining valuable information. He then took his party down the German front line and found a strong enemy post, which he proceeded to bomb though under heavy fire. For his courage and initiative he was awarded the Military Cross. Second-Lieutenant F. Walker of the same battalion led a patrol under heavy fire the same night through the enemy's front line posts and reconnoitred his second line, which was found to be strongly held. He had previously done similar work and, at this time, gained much valuable information by daring reconnaissances, often under considerable opposition. He too received the Military Cross.

1ST/7TH BN.

The 1st/8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel O. St. L. Davies, Manchester Regiment) was less fortunate on 1st February. A patrol under Second-Lieutenant J. C. J. Toomer went out near

1ST/8TH BN.

Cambrin to bring in the machine gun and other fittings of a German aeroplane which had been brought down in No Man's Land by anti-aircraft fire. This task was successfully accomplished, but Toomer became separated from his party, lost his way and was taken prisoner by the Germans.

Very fine initiative and determination were shown on 3rd February by Second-Lieutenant J. Hurst, of the 15th Battalion, who stayed out in a shell hole all day in order to observe the enemy's movements and spotted a party of some forty Germans preparing to raid one of the battalion's posts. When they started to advance he opened fire with a Lewis gun, killing some and scattering the rest. There was no raid: Hurst got the Military Cross. 15TH BN.

The 10th Battalion (Captain H. B. Pegrum, M.C., in temporary command) was able to claim a German aeroplane to itself, as a machine flying low over the British lines near Havrincourt on 8th February was hit in the engine by a machine-gun bullet and crashed near a detached post of the battalion, who took prisoner the injured officer and pilot found in it. 10TH BN.

A few nights later Second-Lieutenant A. Elliott, of the 1st/7th, extended the work he had done on 1st February. He was sent out on 12th February to blow up the enemy's mineshaft which he had reconnoitred on the previous occasion. He first carried out another reconnaissance with four men, then came back to his own lines and led forward a party of a Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers, and some men of his own platoon carrying a large weight of explosives. He helped the tunnellers in their task and guarded the entrance to the shaft while the charge was laid and the fuse lit. Although there was a strong German post only a hundred yards away, the shaft was successfully destroyed, thanks largely to Elliott's careful preparations. He was awarded a bar to his Military Cross for his work on this occasion. 1ST/7TH BN.

A rather bigger operation was carried out by the 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel L. M. Stevens, D.S.O., Worcestershire Regiment) on the outskirts of Houthulst Forest on 15th February, when a party consisting of Second-Lieutenants H. C. Franks and H. J. Plenderleith and fifty N.C.Os. and men, with a covering party of ten men under Second-Lieutenant R. Bauld, raided an enemy post at Turenne Crossing close to where the 20th Battalion had been involved on 22nd October, 1917. The main body formed up astride the road leading from Aden House to Turenne Crossing—and thence to Staden—with Bauld's party protecting its left. Zero was at 8.30 p.m., when a heavy artillery barrage came down very accurately supported by machine guns which fired 30,000 rounds during the operation. The German wire was a formidable obstacle, but a way through it was partially cut by means of a Bangalore torpedo. A still more formidable obstacle was then encountered in the shape of the German barrage which came down on their own wire and on Turenne Crossing itself. Nevertheless the raiders made their way through (one of the first being Corporal W. T. Smith), reached the 18TH BN.

Crossing and, led by Plenderleith and Smith—who rushed forward, disposed of two Germans with his revolver and set about the rest of the garrison with bombs—stormed a "pill-box" which lay in an angle formed by the road and the railway, capturing in it a wounded officer, a wounded "Aspirant," three wounded and six unwounded men. Franks, who had been wounded in the knee shortly after leaving the starting point but had refused to leave his men, then withdrew the party successfully. The casualties were not heavy: one man was missing and, in addition to Franks, twelve men were wounded. The Military Cross was awarded to Second-Lieutenants H. C. Franks and H. J. Plenderleith, the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Corporal W. T. Smith, and the Military Medal to Privates J. McGovern, J. O'Brien, T. O'Neill, W. H. Peverley, E. Ross and W. H. Tordoff, in connexion with the operation.

6TH, 2ND 7TH AND 2ND 8TH BNS

On 16th February the 6th, 2nd 7th and 2nd 8th Battalions moved, with the rest of the 66th Division, to the Somme area. The War Diary of the 2nd 8th Battalion records the departure from the Ypres Salient with a sigh of relief which proved to be premature!

15TH AND 16TH BNS

On 18th February the outskirts of Houthulst Forest were the scene of another minor operation, carried out by the 15th (Lieutenant-Colonel H. K. Utterson, D.S.O., Dorsetshire Regiment) and 16th (Lieutenant-Colonel A. Gillon, Highland Light Infantry) Battalions, in conjunction with other units. The raid was ordered by the divisional commander with the object of obtaining identifications and of securing machine guns and other booty and also samples of German food. The weather was frosty and there was a half-moon which gave enough light to enable men to avoid the many shell holes, all of them full of icy water. At dusk Second-Lieutenant J. W. Bennett, of the 15th Battalion, who had made careful reconnaissances on the two previous nights, volunteered to go out with Serjeant J. Blackledge, M.M., and cut a path through the wire near the objective—Renard Farm on a by-road leading through the Forest from Langemarck northwards to Clercken. While doing so, Bennett was wounded in the arm and the cutting of the wire had to be completed by a party using a Bangalore torpedo. But before he left he had succeeded in locating a German machine gun on the flank and giving such clear information as made it possible to arrange additional artillery fire to neutralize it. The raiding force proper was divided into three parties. No. 1 consisted of fifty-five N.C.Os. and men of the 15th Battalion, under Captain A. W. Cantwell, M.C., and had Renard Farm itself as its objective. It was sub-divided into seven groups, to each of which was allotted a special task such as cutting wire, laying tapes, carrying torpedoes and "mopping-up." No. 2 Party, consisting of thirty-two men of the 16th Battalion, under Second-Lieutenant T. Lines, D.C.M., had as its objective a road junction on one flank of Renard Farm; while No. 3 Party, of the same strength and unit, under Second-Lieutenant M. Wright, had as its objective the corresponding road junction on the other flank. Both these parties were under the

command of Captain J. F. Johnson. The parties formed up without difficulty close to the support trenches and advanced at 11 p.m. under cover of a barrage fired by artillery, mortars and machine guns. No. 1 Party advanced in its groups up the road, keeping close to the barrage. With it went two men of the Royal Engineers who successfully used Bangalore torpedoes to complete the wire-cutting which Bennett and Blackledge had begun. The party then advanced to Renard Farm with ease, searched the whole area round it, did much damage, killed many Germans and took fifteen prisoners, including a wounded officer who died before he could be moved. Much of the success of this party was due to Cantwell's careful preparation and thorough previous reconnaissance, as well as to his cool control of the progress of events during the raid. Blackledge ably seconded him and, when his wire-cutting duties were ended, took command of three of the groups into which No. 1 Party was divided and led them to their destination. In the meanwhile No. 2 Party had also advanced up the road without difficulty, but when they came to the cross-roads where they had to bear to the left and had got through the enemy's wire they encountered a German post where there were several dead and badly wounded men. One unwounded German was taken prisoner. Lines pushed on and, entering the edge of the Forest, attacked a post about two hundred yards farther on which comprised about nine Germans. Lines himself shot three men and took one prisoner, while Second-Lieutenant J. McClymont shot an officer and a man and also took a prisoner. The Germans fought stubbornly, but they appeared to have been taken by surprise, largely owing to the fact that the raiders had followed the barrage so closely. The remaining party was not so successful. Through keenness it moved too close to the barrage and after advancing about a hundred yards became disorganized owing to the heavy shell fire and was unable to reach its objective. But the rest of the operation had been a complete success and cost the two battalions only two officers and twenty other ranks wounded, none of them seriously. Captain A. W. Cantwell, M.C., received a bar to his Military Cross for his share in the raid ; Second-Lieutenants J. W. Bennett, T. Lines, D.C.M., and J. McClymont were awarded the Military Cross ; and Serjeant J. Blackledge, M.M., received the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Military Medals were awarded to Serjeants J. Ford and J. D. Wade, Corporal F. Newton and Privates J. Boschi and J. Gallagher, of the 15th Battalion ; and to Corporal H. Harris, Lance-Corporal J. W. Sutherington and Privates J. W. Pickup, W. Suthers and L. Tite, of the 16th Battalion.

The same battalions also took a minor part in a raid in the same area on 27th February carried out by the 2nd Manchester Regiment. During the operation "A" Company of the 16th Battalion, under 16TH BN. Captain F. F. Waugh, searched Owls Wood, on the outskirts of Houthulst Forest, thoroughly by means of four patrols, each consisting of an officer and a platoon. They found many empty

German posts and two machine guns. But the latter were active and, an attempt to rush them being unsuccessful, the patrols withdrew with a loss of ten killed and nineteen wounded. At 11.22 p.m. the same night, about three hours after the raid of the 2nd Manchester Regiment, the artillery put down a barrage for
15TH BN. fifteen minutes, after which a platoon of the 15th Battalion, under Captain L. C. Mandleberg, searched the neighbourhood of Maréchal Farm, but could find nothing as the enemy had evidently not returned after the raid. Their expedition was, however, not entirely in vain; for about dawn a party of this patrol captured an officer and two men of the 4th German Army Storm Troops who had been sent out to make a special reconnaissance. Some valuable information of the enemy's future intentions was obtained from these prisoners.

The weather at this time was most unfavourable, and on 1st
2ND/8TH BN. March the 2nd/8th Battalion marched fifteen miles from Villers Carbonnel to Hancourt, east of Péronne, ending in a heavy snowstorm, though it had the consolation of being met by the 66th Divisional Band on arrival.

The 66th Division was moving up to take over the sector of trenches near Hargicourt which it was holding when the full blast of the German attack fell upon it on 21st March. Active patrolling began and signs were not lacking that the expected German offensive would not be long delayed. On 8th March, when Lance-Corporal
6TH BN. A. Jackson, M.M., of the 6th Battalion and the 107th Trench Mortar Battery, went to the advanced posts at dawn in accordance with his usual practice, he saw twelve German officers with maps engaged in observing the British line. He at once went back to his gun, where he waited till the party moved to a spot of which he had the range accurately. Then single-handed he fired thirty shells which entirely erased the German officers. "The History of the 2nd 6th Lancashire Fusiliers," from which this account is drawn, also records that, when the German trenches were raided at this period, orders required that propaganda leaflets should be left behind which pointed out how formidable were the British Army and its defences in front of the Germans and how ill-advised the latter would be to attempt any attack unless they wished to be driven back to their starting point with a sore head!

Great activity was shown by the 66th Division and Second-
6TH BN. Lieutenants J. B. Gartside and I. Skene, 6th Battalion, were both awarded the Military Cross for good work in command of fighting patrols sent out between 1st and 10th March in order to obtain identifications and thus keep the authorities posted up to date as regards the movements of German divisions and any fresh arrivals which might throw light on the enemy's intentions. Second-
2ND/7TH BN. Lieutenant P. H. Edridge, 2nd/7th Battalion, also earned the Military Cross at this time for successfully organizing a raid on the German trenches which resulted in the capture of two prisoners without any loss to his own party.

Once more the pendulum of interest swings back to the north, where three raids were carried out in March. The first was near Poelcappelle, where at 4.15 a.m. on 7th March, Second-Lieutenant W. Watt, with Second-Lieutenant R. C. R. Robinson and forty other ranks of "X" Company of the 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. F. Crook, D.S.O.), raided the enemy defences round Colibri Farm, close to the Turenne Crossing which was the scene of an operation by the 18th Battalion on 15th February. The forming-up of the party was covered by a patrol of twenty men under Second-Lieutenant J. C. Grime which kept No Man's Land under control in front of the assembly position. Unfortunately, some of the batteries which were to provide the covering fire began to shoot several minutes before the time laid down. This appears to have alarmed the enemy, who were seen to leave their posts hastily as the raiders approached. They may thereby have escaped from the latter, but they must have been caught by the protective barrage. The enemy posts and shelters were found to have been severely damaged by shell fire ; and the work of destruction was completed with bombs. Watt then led his party back, with the loss of only three men slightly wounded. 17TH BN.

The second raid was delivered by the 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. K. Utterson, D.S.O.), on the outskirts of Houthulst Forest as before, though a few hundred yards to the west of the scene of the raid of 18th February. At 11 p.m. on 20th March, "C" Company (Captain K. I. F. Leeming) on the left and "D" Company (Captain L. C. Mandleberg) on the right, both under the command of Major A. Stone, advanced under a barrage with the object of entering the enemy's trenches at the edge of the Forest. "D" Company were very soon held up by wire stretched across a road. Two Bangalore torpedoes inserted in it failed to explode, whereupon Mandleberg personally directed the laying of a third one under heavy machine-gun fire. Three sappers were, however, killed and it proved impossible to explode it. Mandleberg at once reconnoitred for some other way of passing the wire and attempted to work round the flank of the machine gun, but without success. At this stage, Major Stone came forward and under heavy fire moved up and down examining the wire. Coming to the conclusion that it could not be crossed, he ordered the company to withdraw, which it did at 12.15 a.m. under his supervision in good order, Mandleberg carrying back with him the body of one of the men killed at the wire in spite of the heavy fire at close range which followed him. "C" Company had meanwhile been slightly more fortunate ; for though they found a strong belt of wire there were no signs of the enemy near it. They accordingly crossed it and advanced to another belt of wire. Here they were met with very hot machine-gun fire and eventually came upon two "pill-boxes" which prevented any further progress. They did, however, succeed in inflicting a number of casualties on the enemy and captured an officer, killing two orderlies who were with him. The company withdrew to its original 15TH BN.

position at 12.5 a.m., its casualties being two N.C.Os. killed and seven men wounded. Leeming made a very gallant attempt to bring back the bodies of the N.C.Os. under heavy machine-gun fire. Major A. Stone was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his coolness and gallantry, while Captains L. C. Mandleberg and K. I. F. Leeming received the Military Cross.

On 23rd March, "B" Company of the 15th Battalion carried out another raid in much the same area as that of two days before. The advance began at 2 a.m.; little opposition was met; and the wire was not difficult to cross. Some German machine guns gave some trouble, but did not succeed in preventing the company from entering the German trenches in several places and obtaining three prisoners at a cost of one man killed and one officer and one man wounded. Lieutenant C. H. J. Foster performed very useful work in searching the area under considerable fire and was awarded the Military Cross.

2ND/8TH BN.

Two incidents occurred to the 2nd 8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. Stokes Roberts, M.C., Worcestershire Regiment) on 17th March which form a link between the minor operations just described and the critical days which the narrative is approaching. The battalion was in the line about 1,500 yards north-north-east of Hargicourt. The situation was quiet. Early in the morning Second-Lieutenant C. C. Moore took out a fighting patrol of seventeen N.C.Os. and men, which came into collision with a large German patrol on the road leading to Bellicourt. A hand-to-hand fight ensued in which the enemy were beaten off with several casualties and Moore succeeded in bringing the majority of his party back. He had, however, lost a man killed and six men wounded, of whom he had had to abandon three; and he promptly organized another party with which he returned to the scene of the fight and brought in the three remaining wounded men. His coolness and pluck earned him the Military Cross. At 9.30 a.m. the same day a small party of Germans suddenly appeared in front of one of the 2nd/8th Battalion's posts, one of them studying a map. They were challenged and bolted towards their own lines, fire being opened on them by the sentries. One of the Germans, however, stood his ground and opened fire. A company serjeant-major and a man ran out and took him prisoner. He proved to be a warrant officer of a 15-centimetre howitzer battery of the 28th Foot Artillery Regiment. The rest of the party had consisted of two officers, another warrant officer and a man of the same regiment. The prisoner would say little except that the party had recently returned from leave and that, not knowing that part of the line very well, they had lost their way and wandered towards the British lines by mistake. In view of what happened four days later, it seems more likely that this was the reconnaissance party of a newly arrived battery which was trying to find a way forward when the time came for the unit to follow up the attacking infantry.

"MARCH, 1918"

"FIRST SOMME, 1918," "ST. QUENTIN," "FIRST BAPAUME, 1918," "ROSIÈRES," "FIRST ARRAS, 1918," "ANCRE, 1918"

2nd, 1st/5th, 6th, 1st 7th, 2nd 7th, 1st 8th, 2nd 8th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th Battalions

It had been for some time evident that the Germans, considerably strengthened on the Western Front by the collapse of Russia, intended to make a supreme effort to inflict defeat on the British and French Armies before the appearance in the field of the American Army gave the Allies such a preponderance in numbers and equipment that the victory of the Central Powers would be impossible. Since the Americans could be expected to be ready to take their place in appreciable numbers in the late summer of 1918, the German offensive would obviously have to be launched in the early spring. As the first weeks of the year passed by, it was possible to narrow down the probable date of attack to the middle or end of March; and, in the end, information from various sources made it reasonably certain that 20th or 21st March, 1918, was to be "The Day." It may be noted that 21st March is the first day of spring.

Though there were many indications of hostile preparations for an offensive opposite the British front east of Péronne, there were similar indications on the French front in Champagne, near Verdun, and elsewhere. There was therefore uncertainty as to where the main German blow would fall, an uncertainty which the enemy did everything to foster and which in the event was responsible for an inevitable delay in moving troops to the succour of the hard-pressed Third and Fifth British Armies. For it was upon them that the full force of a fierce bombardment, lasting between four and five hours, fell in the early hours of Thursday, 21st March, 1918; and against twenty of their divisions that sixty-two German divisions were hurled in a fog so thick that in places men could keep contact with their neighbours on the march only by holding on to each other's equipment. In many places the assaulting troops had penetrated the forward defences and reached battalion and even brigade headquarters before the latter, deprived of all telephonic communication by the bombardment, were aware that an infantry attack had even been launched. Many of those holding the front line were never seen again. In spite of heroic resistance by small bodies of troops at all parts of the front, so many holes had been blasted in the human and material defences by the German shells that a retirement was inevitable if any sort of continuous line was to be preserved and the enemy prevented from causing such wide gaps that he could have found a flank and surrounded large elements or even made his way through to the Channel ports. For ten days on end, with heavy casualties but dogged refusal to be beaten, the British fought their way back until the arrival of British and French reinforcements, together with the exhaustion of the Germans, brought the ordeal to a halt.

In such circumstances, it could not be expected that detailed records should be kept or that memories should be accurate. While the main outline of each day's fighting is by now clear, it is still not possible to give a full and exact account of the actions of each battalion involved. Those who took part in the terrible events of March, 1918, will without doubt find points in which the narrative which follows is in error; they will, it is hoped, forgive its shortcomings, for they will appreciate that it has not been possible to consult every survivor and that versions are often in conflict. Faced by such confusion, it seemed that the only satisfactory method of handling the available material was to deal with the battalions which were first drawn into the struggle and to follow their fortunes as far as possible right to the end, and then to treat the next battalion to be involved in the same way. The fact that references to the 6th Battalion are more ample than to other battalions is due to the very full account which was compiled by Captain C. H. Potter, M.C., and Captain A. S. C. Fothergill in their "History of the 2nd 6th Lancashire Fusiliers," published in 1926, and which has been freely drawn upon.

The Annihilation of the 197th Infantry Brigade

"FIRST SOMME, 1918," "ST. QUENTIN," "ROSIÈRES"

6th, 2nd/7th and 2nd/8th Battalions

The eve of the German offensive found the 197th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General O. C. Borrett, D.S.O.) holding a sector of the line very nearly a mile in length to the north-east of the village of Hargicourt and about 2,000 yards south of the scene of the dummy attack made by the 2nd/5th Battalion on 20th November, 1917. The 2nd/8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. Stokes-Roberts, M.C., Worcestershire Regiment) was responsible for the whole of the front line and had three companies in forward posts and one in reserve behind the left front company. The 2nd/7th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. A. S. Gell, M.C., Royal Fusiliers) was in support, with three companies occupying the brigade support line of trenches (which ran due north from Hargicourt and about 1,500 yards behind the front line) and one company in Sherwood Trench, to the north-west of the village and covering the north-east edge of the Templeux-le-Guérard quarries. The brigade reserve, the 6th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. S. Hurlbatt, M.C., Manchester Regiment) was in Roisel, but its battle station was in the "Brown Line," the main system of resistance, to the north of Hesbecourt.

2ND/8TH BN.

2ND/7TH BN.

6TH BN.

Late on 20th March the brigade received warning that the German offensive would probably begin on the following day. All working parties were therefore cancelled and all units warned. At 10 p.m. the 6th Battalion was ordered to stand by and to be ready to move to its battle stations at ten minutes' notice. At 3.45 a.m.

on 21st the 2nd/8th Battalion reported that a patrol had just come back with the information that there were abnormally large numbers of the enemy in the trenches opposite their right company. Artillery fire was brought to bear on this area as soon as possible. As it was now clear that the long-expected attack was to take place, the 6th Battalion was ordered to its battle stations at 4 a.m. Thanks to careful previous preparation, it was ready to move as soon as the order was received. Its march was hampered by the heavy bombardment with gas and high-explosive shell which began soon afterwards and by a dense fog which prevailed over a wide area till after 11 a.m. The shelling cut all the telephone lines and runners were the only means of communication; but their movements also were hampered by the shelling, by the mist and by the need for wearing their anti-gas respirators continuously, with the result that very little information and very few orders ever reached their destinations in time to be of use. Nevertheless by 6 a.m. the 6th Battalion was in its appointed positions, though its report to that effect did not reach brigade headquarters a mile and a half away till 8.10 a.m. The shelling increased in intensity and then lifted from the front line soon after 8.30 a.m., when an infantry attack developed against the 2nd/8th Battalion in the forward positions. Dense masses of Germans advanced and overwhelmed the whole area occupied by the battalion, whose headquarters were captured in a dug-out before they had the slightest idea that the assault had even begun. The attack had come in a southerly direction from Lempire towards Hargicourt and had consequently turned the left flank of the brigade. At about 9 a.m. the German swarms reached the support position and attacked the 2nd/7th Battalion in front of the quarries close to Templeux-le-Guérard. Two hours later the enemy had captured the whole of the forward and support lines.

2ND/8TH BN.

2ND/7TH BN.

The great majority of the 2nd/8th had been killed or taken prisoner, but Second-Lieutenant G. L. Sayer and a few other survivors made their way back and, joining the 6th Battalion, were of great assistance in defending strong-points in and near the village of Templeux. Shortly before noon the Germans had captured Sherwood Trench, were working their way past the east of the quarries and were in parts of Templeux itself. The fog had by now lifted, and the situation could be more clearly seen. Lines of Germans on the high ground beyond the quarries presented a very favourable target of which full advantage was taken by the artillery with good results. But more active measures seemed to be called for; and at about 12.30 p.m. Major W. Wike led a counter-attack of "A" (Captain J. L. Lee, M.C.) and "B" (Captain H. C. Gill) Companies of the 6th Battalion which succeeded in clearing the village and establishing a line along its north-eastern face. But the centre was gradually pressed back and fighting took place in the village, the outskirts of which changed hands several times. Finally the Germans succeeded in turning the left flank of the position and "A" Company was forced to retire in order to escape being

2ND/8TH BN. 6TH BN.

surrounded. It hoped to make a stand on some high ground at the southern end of the village, but this was in full view of the enemy ; and, though the Germans were prevented from coming out of the village in this direction for about twenty minutes, two Lewis-gun teams were put out of action and such a concentration of fire brought to bear on the survivors that they were compelled to make a further withdrawal.

2ND/7TH BN. In the meanwhile the 2nd/7th Battalion, which was endeavouring to form a centre of resistance at the quarries, had been surrounded by the turning movement which had forced the 6th Battalion out of the village. A small party under Captain E. A. Smirke succeeded in breaking through and, thanks to his cool leadership and disregard of all danger, made its way back to the cross-roads to the south-west of Templeux, where it attached itself to the 6th Battalion. The remainder of the battalion, sorely depleted in numbers by the long bombardment and the close fighting extending over so many hours, held on in the quarries and made no attempt to escape, as an order to retire had miscarried. At about 5 p.m., exhausted and without ammunition, the survivors were compelled to surrender.

The 6th Battalion, strengthened by Smirke's party, now held a position in and on the outskirts of Templeux. But the Germans, in whose advance there had been a halt of several hours, came on again and by 6 p.m. had gained control of the whole village. At that time the 197th Infantry Brigade consisted of four groups. Part of the 6th Battalion, with some Royal Engineers and men of the Border Regiment and other units, a total of about sixty of all ranks with two machine guns and two Lewis guns, were to the south of Templeux. The survivors of the 2nd/7th, under Smirke, together with the 197th Light Trench Mortar Battery, faced the western outskirts of the village. The remnants of the 2nd/8th and some men of a Tunnelling Company were placed to the north-west of it, while two companies of the 6th were in support in the "Brown Line." The whole of the forward troops were under Major T. J. Biddolph, second-in-command of the 6th Battalion.

The night of 21st/22nd March was fine and comparatively quiet, though German patrols were active and were evidently anxious to find out whether the British were retiring under cover of darkness. The post held by Second-Lieutenant I. Skene, M.C., and his platoon of the 6th Battalion was attacked during the night by a party of Germans but had little difficulty in driving them off. Another German patrol tried to slip past the southern end of Templeux, but was turned back by "A" Company of the 6th, leaving an officer and two men dead. The defenders could do little in the way of reconnaissance as their energies had to be fully applied to improving their own position and particularly the "Brown Line," which consisted for the most part of a trace six inches deep behind belts of wire. At 2.30 a.m. Major Biddolph was ordered to hold firmly to this line, with outposts in front of it, and only to retire fighting, the crux of the position being the high ground to the south of Templeux.

At about 4 a.m. on 22nd March the German bombardment opened for the next stage of his attack. The shelling lasted for nearly five hours and fell with great severity on the rear area, and particularly on the "Brown Line," where many casualties were caused. Once again a thick fog was spread over the whole countryside. At about dawn the German infantry attacked in dense masses. Skene's platoon was overwhelmed almost at once, but a runner managed to slip through with news of the situation and "A" and "D" Companies (now combined) of the 6th found a gap and also slipped away just in time. They re-formed in a trench farther back and joined with other troops in holding up the German advance for a while. Soon, however, German bombers entered the trench from the left and orders were issued for every officer to take command of any men of his own battalion whom he could find and make his way towards Roisel. This retirement was harried by machine-gun fire from four low-flying German aeroplanes, painted red ; but it was conducted in good order with occasional halts to drive off the pursuers when they pressed too close. Eventually "A" Company joined some dismounted cavalry lying in the open near Georges Copse, about 1,200 yards west-south-west of Templeux, and joined with them in holding up the enemy's advance. The position could not, however, have been held for long and a move was made towards some trenches farther to the rear. Captain Lee and a number of his men were hit by the hail of bullets which greeted this withdrawal and were taken prisoner.

The enemy then swept on, burst into the "Brown Line" and surrounded the battalion headquarters of the 6th. Two officers alone escaped—Captain E. G. Dingley (the medical officer) and Second-Lieutenant J. Sutherland (the assistant adjutant). The latter collected such survivors as he could and took up a position some seventy yards in rear, where he was killed shortly afterwards. His party, and others like it, nevertheless fought gallantly throughout the morning and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. But the fog made it impossible to discover where the Germans were attacking in strength or what the real direction of their advance was ; and the result was that they were able to penetrate into small sections of the "Brown Line" which there were insufficient troops to guard and to fight their way along it until eventually they gained possession of the whole system of the "Brown Line." The survivors of the brigade then fell back slowly towards Roisel, where another stand was made by the 2nd/7th, reinforced by a detachment of the Motor Machine Gun Corps. They succeeded in checking the Germans until they found both their flanks exposed and were therefore compelled to retire. By now the troops of the 50th Division had taken up a defensive position farther back and the brigade was ordered at 12.30 a.m. to withdraw through them and to assemble at Cartigny. This was accomplished soon after 2 p.m. The 6th Battalion reorganized itself, Captain J. S. Barker assuming command in succession to Major T. J. Biddolph, who had been taken prisoner in

the "Brown Line." At this stage, the casualties were estimated to be :—

6th Battalion	14 officers	290 other ranks
2nd/7th Battalion ...	14 officers	450 other ranks
2nd/8th Battalion ...	17 officers	480 other ranks

At 4.30 p.m. the brigade was ordered to move to Buire, where it rested for a while under the protection of outposts. It had, however, now become evident that, owing to events on other parts of the front, a further withdrawal must be made if cohesion was to be maintained. At about 8 p.m., therefore, the brigade was ordered to march through Doingt and Péronne and to take up a position on the west bank of the Somme with its right about 1,000 yards north of Eterpigny and its left at the northern end of la Chapellette, three quarters of a mile south of Péronne. The brigade was safely established in its new line by 2.20 a.m. on 23rd March, the 2nd/7th being on the right, the 6th on the left, and 2nd/8th in reserve near Biaches. The day was quiet and was devoted to consolidation of the line, but towards evening the increasing shelling told of the forward movement of German batteries. The orders issued provided that the line of the river would be held to the last and that when the troops on the farther side had safely crossed all the bridges were to be blown up. By 12 noon the last of the troops from the eastern side of the Somme had passed the bridge at Péronne, which was successfully destroyed. But some hitch occurred over the demolition of the railway bridge, close to the left of the 6th Battalion, which was the responsibility of the railway authorities ; and although Captain Barker and Second-Lieutenants E. Bowden and E. Mead made further attempts during the afternoon it was never blown up. By this time the withdrawal of all troops from the east bank of the Somme and a still further withdrawal by all troops north of the river and west of Péronne had left the northern flank of the 197th Brigade exposed. The 199th Brigade was therefore placed in position on its left and at about 4 p.m. "C" Company, the reserve of the 6th Battalion, was ordered to reinforce the 2nd/5th Manchester Regiment in that area.

On 24th March the German shelling increased in severity. At about 4 p.m. the enemy reached the river bank opposite the 197th Brigade and under artillery and machine-gun fire made repeated efforts to cross. But they were repulsed each time. A wooden bridge on the 6th Battalion's front was found to have been only partially destroyed and it was soaked in petrol and burnt by a party from that unit. Farther to the north, the Germans had succeeded in throwing a footbridge across the Somme during the previous night and had passed a battalion across by means of it. Taking advantage of this bridgehead, more troops crossed and between 4 and 5 p.m. on 24th the battalion on the left of the 6th Battalion was obliged to give ground. The 6th, its flank thus turned, was in its turn compelled to withdraw. How fine its fighting spirit remained was shown by the

refusal of Lance-Corporal J. H. Cooke, who was in command of a forward post, to retire until the order to do so, passed along the line by word of mouth, had been authoritatively confirmed by an officer. Till then, he held on with great gallantry and determination. Under very heavy artillery and machine-gun fire the battalion fought its way back for about a mile to a position on the high ground between Barleux and Biaches, where troops of the 50th Division were already in place. The new line was reached at dusk. The morning of 25th March was marked by further heavy shelling. The bridgehead and the unbroken railway bridge at Péronne enabled large bodies of Germans to cross on the left of the new line. They had also seized the still serviceable remains of the bridge at Eterpigny on the right. As the clear day wore on, it became evident that the Barleux position was rapidly becoming untenable and, under orders, the brigade withdrew in good order to a position between Assevillers and Herbécourt. Lieutenant E. H. Parsons of the 2nd/8th did yeoman service in charge of a forward signalling station from which he sent back valuable information. When the withdrawal began, he continued to supply information, "tapping in" all along his line. (He was later severely wounded while leading an attempt to capture a German machine gun which was holding up a counter-attack.) Casualties had been so heavy in the 197th Brigade that practically all semblance of its original organization had by this time disappeared and men were grouped under officers as found most convenient. On the other hand, small but very valuable reinforcements were beginning to arrive. Captain E. L. Higgins, M.C., of the 2nd/7th, hurried back from leave in England when he heard of the German offensive, as did Lieutenant-Colonel W. B. Little, D.S.O., M.C. (5th Border Regiment). The latter was put in command of a battalion of about six hundred men of various units drawn from the 66th Divisional Reinforcement Camp which was formed on 25th March. One company was allotted to Captain Higgins and another, composed chiefly of Lancashire Fusiliers, to Captain C. H. Potter, M.C., 6th Battalion, who had just returned from hospital, with Lieutenant F. Heydon (6th), Lieutenant C. H. Vines (6th) and Lieutenant W. Simpson (2nd/8th) as his other officers. This unit, known as "Little's Force," marched at 3 a.m. on 26th March from Corbie through Warfusée-Abancourt and along the main road to the 6th Battalion transport lines near Proyart. Later it moved to Harbonnières, east of which it took over at dusk the line held by a composite battalion formed from the 198th Infantry Brigade.

On the same day (26th March) German artillery fire began at dawn; and at 8 a.m. the Germans attacked. Troops on the left of the position held by the 197th Brigade had to retire, and the brigade could only conform. Throughout the early part of the day, the Brigade Intelligence Officer, Lieutenant F. C. Braby, of the 2nd/8th, did gallant work, not only in carrying important messages to and fro under heavy fire, but also in collecting a party of men

in his vicinity and organizing a successful temporary defence, resulting in heavy casualties to the enemy. Fighting a rearguard action all the way, in which Barker and Bowden both distinguished themselves and both became casualties (the former being taken prisoner), the brigade fell back to Dompierre. But after a pause there it was ordered to fight its way steadily back to the high ground between Vauvillers and Rainecourt. The withdrawal was harassed by the machine-gun fire of a low-flying German aeroplane and was made under difficult conditions as the enemy had advanced rapidly on the right and there was considerable danger of being cut off by that flank. Nevertheless by 3.30 p.m. the retirement had been completed and the new line taken up as ordered, with the remnants of the 2nd 8th Battalion on the left. Soon after, however, owing to heavy machine-gun and artillery fire, the 197th Brigade was forced to establish a temporary line to the west of Framerville, but at 5 p.m. a counter-attack was organized which drove the enemy out of the village. At dusk the 2nd 7th Battalion was in position near Vauvillers with the 6th and 2nd 8th prolonging the line to the north close to Framerville.

Early on 27th March, another fine and clear day, the Germans captured Vauvillers and, by a simultaneous thrust southwards from Proyart, put the left of the brigade's line in jeopardy. The situation was, however, restored by the division on the left. But at about 12 noon the division on the other flank fell back and the anxiety was transferred in that direction. The enemy next advanced from Framerville. Little's Force did its best to hold him up, but was soon overwhelmed and after heavy losses withdrew to some trenches on the eastern edge of Harbonnières, which formed part of the defences of Amiens—so far already had the Germans advanced in six days. The 197th Brigade itself had also received its share of this attack, and at first was pressed back. But during the afternoon counter-attacks were launched on the Vauvillers–Framerville line, by now strongly held by the Germans. These retorts were at first successful, but in the end the intense machine-gun fire from the flanks forced the attackers back to their original line. The 2nd 8th Battalion played a considerable role in these incidents and suffered further losses to such an extent that henceforth it ceased to have a separate existence but under Captain J. P. Pender became part of one of the composite units subsequently formed. A further though short retirement had to be made later in the day and finally a line was established for the night about half a mile east of Harbonnières.

The next day, 28th March, though fine, opened badly. During the night a German force had crossed from the north side of the Somme at Cérisy and occupied Bayonvillers, behind the left flank of the position held by the 197th Brigade. A company of Royal Engineers and all available Lewis guns were despatched in hot haste to protect the threatened spot. The troops holding the forward line at Harbonnières were ordered to march through that village and Caix and to take up a position facing roughly north between

Guillancourt and Wiencourt-l'Equipée. This difficult movement was carried out in good order and without contact with the enemy. By 9.30 a.m. the new stations had been reached, with Little's Force covering the left between Wiencourt and Marcelcave. But owing to events elsewhere, it was impossible to risk a long stay in such a position and, at about midday, a fresh line was taken up, facing east, close to Ignaucourt. The afternoon was quiet and some reorganization was possible in the sunken road east of Aubercourt. By now the survivors of the 6th, 2nd 7th and 2nd 8th Battalions were so few that they were absorbed into Potter's company of Little's Force. At dusk that evening the line ran from Ignaucourt to near Marcelcave. It was then discovered that the enemy was working round both flanks, that the Force was practically isolated and that if it was not to be captured it must move at once. It therefore marched off through a cold and wet night, exhausted and hungry, and took up a fresh position to the north of Démuin. The village furnished some very welcome food which, with a rest which was enjoyed during 29th March, restored the morale of the gallant little body of men, though it is to be doubted whether many of them agreed with the brigadier who, on a cheering visit to them, asked if they did not intimately prefer a war of movement to life in the trenches!

The 30th March was to be the last day of the ordeal of this party, but it was not to be peaceful. The enemy had gained possession of the hill to the south-east of Démuin and began to penetrate in some strength into the village itself. One company of the composite battalion was detailed for its defence but, after holding up the Germans for a while, was forced back; Major F. Chesnutt-Chesney, 6th Battalion (who had been in hospital on 21st March, and had taken a large draft of convalescents to form the famous "Carey's Force" and, on hearing that his own unit was near him, had obtained leave to rejoin it that very morning) sent Lieutenant W. Simpson with a platoon to the support of the company. Heavy fighting followed in which Simpson displayed great courage and initiative and helped to dispose of a German machine-gun team. Another platoon, under Second-Lieutenant D. R. Mackay, was sent to protect the right flank of Little's Force, but it was cut off by the enemy's advance and taken prisoner. The Germans had in fact established more machine guns on the hill near Démuin and the ridge held by the Force to the north of it therefore became untenable. It was also believed that the troops on the left, near Marcelcave, had retired. A further withdrawal was therefore ordered, to a line on the Hangard–Villers Bretonneux road. With a view to shaking off German pressure, Chesney sent a company under Captain J. C. Leask, M.C., Northumberland Fusiliers, to clear the village. After a severe struggle, Leask succeeded in this task, but lost his life in so doing. Chesney then ordered Lieutenant C. H. Vines to extricate the company and to take up a covering position with Lewis guns in a sunken road behind the village. He saw his men safely out, but when he tried to make good his own escape he was

wounded four times, being eventually knocked unconscious by a wound in the head and taken prisoner. The position in the sunken road proved to be untenable owing to the machine guns in Démuin and the retirement had to be continued, Major Chesney being wounded at about this time. However, by about 2 p.m. the Force had established itself on the Hangard–Villers Bretonneux road.

The enemy did not follow up very rapidly; and when it transpired that the formation on the left were still in their original position, Brigadier-General G. C. Williams, D.S.O., commanding the 198th Infantry Brigade, who happened to be on the spot, decided at about 3 p.m. to counter-attack with the help of some cavalry so as to re-establish the Amiens defences at Démuin and to protect the right flank of their neighbours at Marcelcave. The counter-attack, delivered in pouring rain, made good progress for about 2,000 yards and regained the ridge north of Démuin. In this action, Potter showed the greatest gallantry and inspired such confidence in his exhausted troops that they were able to make the effort asked of them. Second-Lieutenants G. L. Sayer, who had fought gallantly all through from 21st March, and A. Hollinghurst, both of 2nd/8th, were severely wounded at this time. Unfortunately, the ridge could not be held. The German machine guns were still on the hill across the valley; and as there was no cover to be obtained on the ridge from their fire, the troops were compelled to fall back. They were, however, able to take a number of prisoners with them and, at dusk, to occupy a position somewhat farther forward than that from which they had begun the attack.

Early on 31st March the remnants of the 66th Division, now in various "Forces" and composite battalions, were relieved and moved back, first to the neighbourhood of Gentelles and later through Saleux to Seux, eight miles west of Amiens. "At the end of the march," says the War Diary of the 2nd/8th Battalion, "the men were thoroughly exhausted after the strenuous events of the last ten days, but quite happy at the thought of rest." The survivors of the 197th Brigade were formed into a single composite battalion, whose strength on 1st April was 22 officers and 627 other ranks, including a number of reinforcements. The casualties during this period of nightmare had been terrible :—

	Officers			*Other ranks*			
	Killed	*Wounded*	*Missing*	*Killed*	*Wounded*	*Missing*	*Total*
6th Battalion ...	4	19	15	20	146	461	665
2nd/7th Battalion	4	12	21	28	134	482	681
2nd/8th Battalion	—	9	25	30	46	632	742
Totals ...	8	40	61	78	326	1,575	2,088

Among the many meritorious acts which it has been impossible to assign to any particular day was the work performed by Second-Lieutenant R. Shankland of the 2nd/8th Battalion, by Regimental Serjeant-Major W. Watkins of the 6th Battalion, and by Company Quartermaster-Serjeant A. Riding of the 2nd/8th. The first gave

most inspiring leadership to his men : at one stage he made a lone reconnaissance which enabled him to lead a counter-attack to a valuable local success. The second displayed great courage on several occasions during the operations in collecting stragglers and in leading local counter-attacks when officers had become casualties. The third, with complete disregard of personal danger, continuously collected ammunition and issued it to troops holding advanced positions and thus often prevented the necessity for a withdrawal ; his courage and vigour inspired with confidence all who came in touch with him. The decorations awarded to the battalions of the 197th Brigade were as follows :—

6TH BATTALION

Bar to Military Cross

Captain C. H. Potter, M.C.

Military Cross

Captain J. S. Barker

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Regimental Serjeant-Major W. Watkins.
Lance-Corporal J. H. Cooke.

Military Medal

Serjeant W. Ashworth. Serjeant W. Henry.
Lance-Serjeant R. K. Taylor. Corporal E. Hoyle.
Lance-Corporal W. J. Rimmer.

2ND/7TH BATTALION

Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel E. A. S. Gell, M.C. Captain E. L. Higgins, M.C.

Military Cross

Captain E. A. Smirke.

2ND/8TH BATTALION

Military Cross

Lieutenant F. C. Braby (Intelligence Officer, 197th Infantry Brigade).
Lieutenant E. H. Parsons. Second-Lieutenant G. L. Sayer.
Second-Lieutenant R. Shankland. Second-Lieutenant W. Simpson.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Quartermaster-Serjeant A. Riding.

Military Medal

Private G. Parry. Private T. Robinson.

The 197th Infantry Brigade never fought again in its original form. For some months the three battalions provided cadres for the training of newly arrived American units. But although the 6th Battalion remained in the Brigade after amalgamation with the 12th Battalion in August, 1918, the nucleus of the 2nd/7th and 2nd/8th disappeared, the former going to England in July and reappearing as the 24th Battalion, the latter being disbanded and its personnel transferred mainly to the 1st/8th Battalion.

A Long Rear-guard Action

"FIRST SOMME, 1918," "ST. QUENTIN," "FIRST BAPAUME, 1918"

10th Battalion

10TH BN. The next battalion to be drawn into the flood was the 10th (Lieutenant-Colonel G. L. Torrens, D.S.O.), which had been for some months near Havrincourt. It spent from the 8th to the 17th March in training and in burying cable for the V Corps Signals near Hermies in readiness for the expected German attack. On the night of 17th/18th March it took over a sector of trenches, which included "Hughes Trench," "Owen Trench" and "Stock Trench," close to the bend in the half-dug Canal du Nord, north of Havrincourt and about 2,500 yards west-south-west of Graincourt-lez-Havrincourt. At 8.15 a.m. on 21st March the battalion reported that it was being subjected to a very heavy trench-mortar and artillery bombardment, particularly on Hughes Trench. At about 9.30 a.m., as elsewhere, the German infantry advanced, attacking in this area on a front of 1,500 yards. In six consecutive waves they came, but each line was repulsed with heavy loss except in a stretch of about two hundred yards of Hughes Trench held by "A" Company, where the enemy succeeded in gaining a foothold. Lieutenant-Colonel Torrens proposed to restore the line by means of a counter-attack, but was forbidden to do so by the Divisional Commander as it was not the policy to lose men in fighting to retain the forward trenches. The battalion nevertheless had the consolation of capturing a light German trench-mortar and of securing an identification from a dead soldier of the 242nd Reserve Infantry Regiment. The situation remained unchanged during the afternoon and evening, though heavy shelling continued. During the night orders were issued for the 52nd Infantry Brigade to withdraw to the Havrincourt defences, which formed part of the main line of resistance. The battalion began its retirement at 3.30 a.m. on 22nd March, and by 5.30 a.m. was safely in its new position, "C" Company being in the line between the 12th Manchester Regiment and the 9th Duke of Wellington's Regiment, with three other companies in reserve in "City Trench" and "City Support Trench." Repeated attacks were made on this position during the afternoon, but they were all driven back with heavy loss. In view of the worsening situation elsewhere, orders were issued at midnight for the brigade to withdraw to what had been the British front line before the successful British attack on 20th November, 1917. This movement was completed by 7 a.m. on 23rd in spite of considerable probing of the outpost position by very active German patrols. A company of the 12th Manchester Regiment was attached to the 10th, which occupied its new sector with this company and two of its own companies forward and the remainder in support. The morning was fairly quiet but, after a warning order received at 11 a.m., an order arrived at 1.30 p.m. for a further retirement to Rocquigny. One company of

the 10th and three companies of the 12th Manchester Regiment, under Lieutenant-Colonel S. Danby, were to begin the movement, while the remainder of the brigade under Lieutenant-Colonel Torrens were to form a rear guard and fall back gradually. These orders were somewhat modified in execution. "B" and "D" Companies and a Manchester company began the withdrawal, covered by "A" and "C" Companies. Then the latter withdrew to a position west of Havrincourt Wood and in their turn covered the retirement of "B" and "D" Companies to Ruyaulcourt. A considerable amount of fighting took place before the pursuing enemy could be shaken off, but by 4.30 p.m. all troops had reached Ruyaulcourt with very few losses. The battalion adopted artillery formation and marched to Rocquigny, where it arrived at 7 p.m.

During the night information was received that the Germans had reached Bus, less than two miles from Rocquigny, and were pressing on. The units of the 52nd Brigade were therefore ordered to occupy the "Red Line," an old system of trenches running just to the north-east of Rocquigny. The 10th Battalion was in support in the north-east end of the village, with one company holding an outpost line and a picquet across the road leading to Equancourt, patrols being sent some distance down this road. At 3.30 a.m. on 24th March, however, the whole battalion was concentrated in the "Red Line." At 10 a.m. "C" Company was sent to fill up a gap which occurred in the front of the 47th Division on the right of the 52nd Brigade. Shortly afterwards the enemy attacked, but at first his blow did not fall on the brigade. Again the 10th had to help the London units of the 47th Division by sending three companies to their support. "C" Company fought valiantly to maintain its position, but was forced back by heavy machine-gun fire, and the other companies were no more fortunate. The withdrawal was, however, made in good order and the battalion took up a position immediately east of Le Transloy. At 4.30 p.m. orders were received to retire to Flers. This movement was carried out under great difficulties and close pressure from the Germans, who succeeded in cutting off some parties, Captain A. J. Barrow, M.C., commanding "A" Company, being wounded and taken prisoner. Eventually, at 7 p.m., six officers and two hundred other ranks reached Flers, the remainder of the battalion making its way to Le Sars. A position was taken up east of Flers and though German patrols constantly tried to approach it they were all driven off. As, however, the enemy had succeeded in making a substantial advance elsewhere and the troops at Flers were in danger of being cut off, orders were received for yet another withdrawal, to a line east of Martinpuich, which was reached after midnight. It transpired, however, that arrangements had already been made for a brigade of the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division to hold this position, and the 10th Battalion was therefore ordered to continue its march to Courcelette, where it found the party which had become separated in the retirement from Le Transloy. A very

welcome dump of rations was found by the side of the road at Courcelette and the troops were given breakfast before they again marched off through Pozières to a position between Contalmaison and Fricourt. Late in the afternoon of 25th March, in view of the withdrawal of the 47th Division from Mametz Wood, the battalion occupied a line round the north-eastern outskirts of Mametz, where, after sending out patrols towards Montauban, it spent a quiet night until 3 a.m. on 26th, when it once more took to the road and moved through Méaulte and Dernancourt to Henencourt. The march was uneventful except in the case of "D" Company (Captain J. B. Wood) on the right, which was not covered by the rear guard and was cut off. The battalion arrived at Henencourt at 10 a.m. and rested till 5 p.m., when it moved to Senlis. Its stay here, however, was very short as it moved with the remainder of the brigade at 7.30 p.m. to a position just east of Millencourt in readiness to support the 9th Division if necessary in holding up German forces which were reported to have crossed the Ancre and to be advancing. Their services were not, however, required and the battalion was back in billets at Henencourt by 5 a.m. on 27th March. At 10 a.m. that day the battalion was again ordered to take up its position of the previous night as the enemy were believed to be heavily attacking the 9th Division. It reached its allotted post by 2 p.m. and was heavily shelled during the afternoon. At about 3.30 p.m. a message was received to the effect that the Germans had broken through between Laviéville and Ribemont-sur-l'Ancre, to the right rear of the position held by the battalion, which was ordered to swing round and face south. The report proved to be false and the line to be intact, so that at 5 p.m. the battalion was ordered to return to Henencourt, where it spent a quiet night and two restful days on 28th and 29th March. At 8 p.m. on the latter day the battalion took over a sector of the front line just west of Albert. The 30th was quiet and uneventful, but at 5.30 a.m. on 31st March the battalion co-operated in an attack by a brigade on its left to the extent of making a "Chinese" attack, that is, firing Lewis guns and rifles. During the afternoon of that day an enemy party about thirty strong advanced and entered a copse opposite "A" Company (Captain D. L. Waghorn, D.C.M.) from which the whole of the position was commanded. Waghorn promptly organized a counter-attack and, in spite of heavy machine-gun and trench-mortar fire, drove them out, killing six and capturing a machine gun. The battalion was relieved on 2nd April and marched to billets at Warloy Baillon. The casualties during the retreat had been 2 officers and 23 other ranks killed, 3 officers and 117 other ranks wounded, and 2 officers and 87 other ranks missing. Lieutenant-Colonel G. L. Torrens, D.S.O., was awarded a bar to his decoration for his skilful handling of the rear guard throughout the operation, and Captain D. L. Waghorn, D.C.M., was awarded the Military Cross. Other decorations awarded included the Military Medal to **Private F. Keough.**

Another Rear-guard Operation

"FIRST SOMME, 1918," "ST. QUENTIN," "FIRST BAPAUME, 1918"

11th Battalion

After a month's rest and training at Achiet-le-Grand, the 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. C. De R. Martin, D.S.O., M.C., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) marched on 12th March, 1918, to Frémicourt, where it was employed in digging trenches and burying cable so as to strengthen the Corps line of defence. It was to have relieved the 1st West Yorkshire Regiment late on 21st March; but at 5 a.m. that day a very heavy barrage was put down by the Germans on the front line and a few minutes later the battalion was ordered to "Stand to" and to have its breakfasts in readiness for an early move. At about midday a report was received that the enemy had penetrated the Corps line of defence east of Beaumetz-lez-Cambrai, some four miles east-north-east of Frémicourt; and the battalion was ordered to take up a defensive position south of the Bapaume–Cambrai road and about 1,000 yards north of Lebucquière. The battalion dug itself in on this line by linking up shell holes and sent officers' patrols forward to find out what the situation really was in front. It was also ordered to make good as much ground as possible in front of its line by means of patrols. The night was uneventful, as was the morning of 22nd March. But after an unsuccessful attack on the 51st (Highland) Division astride the main road at 2.15 p.m., the Germans succeeded in breaking through the Corps line east of Morchies and pressed forward up the Morchies valley until they reached the road, at the same time gaining possession of Beaumetz. To meet the threat from Morchies and to cover the battalion's left flank, "A" (Captain T. Rufus) and "B" (Captain H. W. J. Lermit) Companies were moved north of the main road and took up a position facing north, "A" on the right, "B" on the left with its outer flank at a beetroot factory which stood at the crossing of the main road and the Lebucquière–Morchies road. During the night, "A" Company were swung round so as to face east with "D" Company (Captain H. C. Stead) in support behind them. That the enemy were close at hand is shown by the fact that a patrol under Lieutenant J. H. Briffa captured a prisoner and that "A" Company captured a German officer and four men and inflicted a number of casualties on German patrols. 11TH BN.

The troops next on the right withdrew during the hours of darkness and the battalion was left holding the point of a salient very vulnerable from the south when the Germans attacked at 5.30 a.m. on 23rd March from Chaufours Wood, 1,000 yards south-east of Morchies. "A" and "D" Companies drove them back with heavy punishment, Rufus displaying great gallantry. But by 6.15 a.m. elements of the division on the left had withdrawn, leaving the battalion in a still more dangerous position about fifty yards south of, and parallel to, the main road. Here again Rufus

showed great coolness and disregard of danger, keeping complete control of his men. Lance-Corporal A. Eastwood, M.M., also distinguished himself. He was in command of a Lewis-gun section and, although he was in danger of being cut off, he would not retire until he had emptied his last magazine at the enemy, thereby considerably delaying them. Though "B" and "C" (Lieutenant G. A. Keir) Companies did some excellent shooting and though Company Serjeant-Major J. F. Haslam, M.M., went from post to post under heavy rifle fire, encouraging the men by his cheerfulness and energy, the Germans managed to establish a machine gun on the high ground near Lebucquière which made the battalion's position untenable. At 8 a.m. Major F. G. Massey, M.C., ordered the battalion to fall back slightly so that its right rested on Lebucquière. This movement was completed by 9 a.m. under heavy fire, but the casualties had also been heavy (Massey being wounded and Captain G. A. Potts, M.C., assuming command) and a further withdrawal was ordered to a line which had been dug some two hundred yards in rear by the 4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry. This position was also turned by the enemy and, as the battalion's flanks had been left uncovered by the retirement of other units, the retreat had to be resumed at 11.30 a.m., the battalion marching to Frémicourt. Constant fighting had thus continued for six hours; but, although the battalion lost nearly half its strength and could not hold its ground, it was the brigade commander's opinion that it inflicted far heavier casualties on the Germans, who pressed on in mass formation and offered the best of targets. At 1.15 p.m. the brigade marched four miles from Frémicourt to Bihucourt, where it arrived at about 3.30 p.m., the 11th Battalion collecting its stragglers and moving on to Savoy Camp near Biefvillers-les-Bapaume, where a peaceful night was spent.

Early in the afternoon of 24th March the battalion moved out and dug itself in on the Biefvillers–Sapignies spur on the left flank of the brigade. At about 9 a.m. on 25th March the Germans attacked Sapignies, forced back the remnants of the division which was holding it and occupied the high ground to the west of the village. This enabled them to install machine guns enfilading the position held by the 11th Battalion, whose left flank was thereby put in such peril that the battalion had to withdraw by two stages to a position nearer Bihucourt. Later, the right flank of the brigade was driven back and the battalion returned to the old British line, won in 1916, running along the south-west side of that village. At 2.30 p.m., in order to conform with the dispositions of the troops on its right, the battalion fell back to a line facing south-east about 1,000 yards farther back. The Germans continued to press on and were seen massing in Loupart Wood, some 2,000 yards south-west of Grévillers. By 6 p.m. they had once again succeeded in bringing enfilade machine-gun fire on to the right flank of the battalion, which was therefore ordered to fall back to the old trench line east of Achiet-le-Petit. Later in the evening the battalion was taken

out of the line and marched to Biez Wood, west of Bucquoy, where it bivouacked for what was left of the night. They were not destined to rest yet, however; for at dawn on 26th March the battalion moved off in a north-westerly direction to a field half a mile east of Hannescamps, whence it moved again at 1 p.m. to a position facing south-east in the old pre-Somme British front line east of the Hannescamps–Fonquevillers road. This movement was ordered so as to ensure a strongly held line in the event of the troops in front falling back, as seemed likely at the time. Here the battalion received a very welcome reinforcement of 5 officers and 216 other ranks from the 5th Entrenching Battalion. It still had two more moves to carry out that day: first, at 6 p.m. it advanced and occupied the old German line north of Essarts-les-Bucquoy, facing east; and finally, at 11 p.m., it marched to join the rest of the brigade just west of Fonquevillers, whence it marched through Souastre to Couin, where at last it was clear of the battle and enjoyed a rest of five hours before it moved towards more comfortable surroundings at St. Leger-les-Domart, which it reached on 28th March.

The battalion's casualties during this period had been 1 officer and 20 other ranks killed, 12 officers and 151 other ranks wounded and 2 officers and 90 other ranks missing. The honours awarded were :—

Distinguished Service Order

Major F. G. Massey, M.C. (New Zealand Rifle Brigade).

Military Cross

Captain T. Rufus. Lieutenant G. A. Keir.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major J. F. Haslam, M.M.

Bar to Military Medal

Serjeant I. Wainman, M.M. Lance-Corporal A. Eastwood, M.M.
Private C. A. Rosser, M.M.

Military Medal

Serjeant C. H. Doleman. Serjeant F. O'Neill.
Serjeant R. F. Ritchie. Corporal J. W. Tomlinson.
Lance-Corporal A. F. Routh. Private A. Ashworth.
Private G. Deakin. Private G. D. Helm.
Private J. J. Mackereth.

"FIRST SOMME, 1918," "FIRST BAPAUME, 1918"

17th and 18th Battalions

18TH BN. The opening of the German offensive found the South-East Lancashire battalions on the outskirts of the Houthulst Forest. Early in March, 1918, the 18th Battalion lost its original Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Irvine, C.M.G., D.S.O., who, after just over three years in command, was promoted colonel and appointed Labour Commandant of the First Army. His place was taken by Lieutenant-Colonel L. M. Stevens, D.S.O (Worcestershire Regiment), who had to leave the battalion to the care of Major

B. C. H. Keenlyside during the greater part of the March operation as he himself was in command of the 104th Infantry Brigade during the absence on leave of Brigadier-General J. W. Sandilands until 26th March. Similarly, Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. F. Crook, D.S.O., 17TH BN. was on leave until 29th March and the 17th Battalion was commanded by Major C. E. Jewels, M.C., until that date.

Late on 21st March, General Headquarters issued orders for the 35th Division, which included the 17th and 18th Battalions, to move down to the Fifth Army forthwith. The two battalions entrained at Peselhoek on the morning of 23rd March and detrained on the following day at Corbie, whence they marched to billets at Vaux-sur-Somme and Sailly-Laurette, one company of each being left at the station for a day for detraining duties. Later the same day the situation had become so serious north-west of Péronne that the two units, and all other available troops in the division, were rushed forward in motor buses. The moves were seriously delayed through the congestion of the roads, which were full of columns of transport moving back, troops moving forward and civilians fleeing for safety with such belongings as they could transport on farm vehicles. When the two battalions reached Maricourt, the enemy was approaching it, and they were placed in support with orders to man the Maricourt defence line (which was in effect the old British front line before the Battle of the Somme in 1916) in the event of an attack. At 9 p.m. a false alarm of a German attack was received and the defences were manned, the 17th Battalion being complimented by the brigade commander for the speed with which it turned out. When the situation had been cleared up, units returned to their original positions.

At 7.45 a.m. on 25th March the Germans opened a heavy barrage over a wide area and followed it with a determined attack in several waves about 11 a.m. The 17th and 18th Battalions occupied their sectors of the Maricourt defences, but, although many gas shells fell amongst them, the attack did not reach them. One hour later, however, the enemy renewed his attacks and made such progress on each side of Maricourt that eventually the 18th Battalion was involved. Confused fighting followed in which every available man, including the clerks and cooks of brigade headquarters, was used to stem the flood. When the situation had been to some extent stabilized, a counter-attack was delivered in which a company of the 17th Battalion was led by Lieutenant H. G. Leaver with great dash and promptness and succeeded in relieving a very critical situation at the Bois de Maricourt, to the east of the village. He was well supported by Company Serjeant-Major H. Colligan, who, owing to the shortage of officers, was commanding a platoon and led it very gallantly and effectively. Serjeant F. Snow also was of great help to Leaver in keeping the men together under heavy fire and, when the position had been regained, in going from post to post encouraging them and seeing to the wounded. At the same time, two platoons of the 18th Battalion under Captain W. E.

Rigby came forward and, handled by him with great ability, succeeded in completing the line. Lieutenant A. S. MacIver, the intelligence officer of the 18th Battalion, also played a useful part in the operation by collecting some stragglers and organizing them into a platoon which he led to another threatened part of the line, accounting for two of the enemy himself. He then remained in the position which he had taken and sent back information which proved of considerable value.

At about 6 p.m. the two battalions took over responsibility for the outpost line of the brigade. But they were not destined to remain there for long. Farther to the north, as the story of the 10th Battalion has shown, the Germans were already approaching the valley of the Ancre; and there was a risk that they might advance down it and cut off the retreat of the forces lying between it and the Somme. Orders were therefore issued for the line to be withdrawn at once to the Bray-sur-Somme–Albert road, all troops except rear guards being clear of Maricourt by 1 a.m. on 26th March. The 17th and 18th Battalions, with part of the 159th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, were entrusted with the difficult duty of acting as rear guard and were ordered to hold the Maricourt defences until 2.45 a.m. The withdrawal was carried out in an orderly manner, in spite of units being considerably mixed; but the fact that it was taking place was betrayed to the Germans by the glow of burning dumps which had been set on fire to prevent them being of use later to the enemy. Rigby again displayed great ability in the handling of his company during this phase of the operations and set a splendid example of coolness to his men until he was severely wounded. The movements of the rear guard were not seriously molested by the enemy, though they were not helped by the desultory but accurate shelling of the roads which they had to use. Eventually the brigade reached its allotted position on the Bray–Albert road, with its right about half a mile north of Bray. The 18th Battalion were on the right and the 17th in the centre, near "Happy Valley," so often used by troops in reserve and at rest during the Battle of the Somme. The Germans were not slow in following up the withdrawal and the first shell arrived about 9.30 a.m. A little over an hour later, mounted German scouts appeared over the ridges to the east of the road, followed by larger bodies of troops who advanced with evident caution but soon began to probe various parts of the new line. By now the troops were very short of rations, water and ammunition. The weather was hot and the long marches which they had had to make since they detrained at Corbie had given many men sore feet, though this trouble was to some extent lessened by the finding of a quantity of socks in a deserted Ordnance store. At about 1 p.m. the Germans attacked the whole of the line held by the brigade. Again confused fighting occurred for several hours, though several incidents stand out. Captain W. B. K. Glass, who commanded the outpost line of the 17th Battalion, showed great skill and helped greatly in keeping the enemy in check. At one

stage he went forward and carried in, under heavy fire, one of his platoon commanders who was severely wounded and who would otherwise have fallen into the enemy's hands. Lieutenant H. G. Leaver, of the same battalion, once more showed great courage under heavy fire and was instrumental in holding a very important point in the line. Second-Lieutenant H. Lewis of the 18th was also very plucky in dealing with part of the attack; he fired a Lewis gun himself and then led a bombing attack, being seriously wounded later in the day.

Instructions had been issued that the troops were not to be allowed to get heavily involved and orders were therefore issued in the afternoon for a further withdrawal. In the early stages of this withdrawal the 18th Battalion was nearly cut off in the Bois des Tailles, two and a half miles west of Bray, and was only rescued by the fire of the 17th Battalion and other units. Thereafter the retirement was carried out in the most methodical manner, units "leapfrogging" through each other in turn in spite of heavy artillery and machine-gun fire and fighting their way slowly back to Morlancourt. It had been hoped that a rest would have been possible here, as another brigade had taken over the duties of rear guard. But a message arrived to the effect that the Germans were already pressing that brigade and might enter the village at any moment. The tired troops therefore moved on once more and put the River Ancre between themselves and the enemy as soon as possible. By the evening a new position had been firmly established, with the 17th Battalion on the right at Ribemont-sur-l'Ancre, the 19th Durham Light Infantry in the centre with elements on the high ground on the south side of the river near Treux, and the 18th Battalion on the left on the outskirts of Buire. The latter unit had suffered heavy casualties during the day, losing 2 officers and 29 other ranks killed, 3 officers and 128 other ranks wounded and 1 officer and 84 men missing. It therefore held its line with "X" and "Y" Companies on the bank of the river, and the amalgamated "Z" and "W" Companies in support.

That evening General Sandilands returned from leave, having commandeered a canteen van in order to complete his journey the quicker, and Lieutenant-Colonel L. M. Stevens resumed command of the 18th Battalion. The next day, 27th, was comparatively quiet; but at about 10 a.m. German scouts were seen coming over the skyline across the Bray–Corbie road, followed by small parties and then by extended lines of men. Soon after, they advanced in force through Morlancourt against Dernancourt, to the left of the 18th Battalion, which helped by its fire to break up the attack. The night of 27th/28th March was quiet but marred by heavy rain. The 28th was more eventful. Several attacks were launched against the British line on the Ancre, of which one, delivered at about 9.30 a.m., involved the 18th Battalion. It was, however, soon repulsed. Second-Lieutenant H. Redfearn, of this battalion, who was in command of several detached posts, was not content to drive the

Germans back with heavy casualties as the result of the good control which he exercised; but he went forward himself and captured a prisoner in order to secure an identification and collect information. Company Serjeant-Major R. Maskell, 18th Battalion, was of great value on this day in very gallantly visiting the platoon which he was now commanding under heavy machine-gun fire and putting new heart into his men. In the afternoon the village of Buire was very heavily shelled, but no further attack reached either the 17th or 18th Battalions. The shelling fortunately did not seriously affect the few meagre comforts which units had been able to find in Buire in the shape of food and wine from deserted houses and hospital blankets of excellent quality from an evacuated Casualty Clearing Station. The 17th Battalion for a time had its headquarters in a derelict tank whose electric light system was still in working order! On the evening of the 28th the brigade was relieved, but on 30th March, the 18th Battalion took over part of the outpost line at Buire, being however again relieved by Australian troops that night. The brigade then withdrew to rest. The decorations awarded to the 17th and 18th Battalions for these operations were as follows:—

17TH BATTALION

Distinguished Service Order

Major C. E. Jewels, M.C.

Military Cross

Captain W. B. K. Glass. Lieutenant H. G. Leaver.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major H. Colligan. Serjeant F. Snow.

18TH BATTALION

Military Cross

Captain W. E. Rigby. Lieutenant A. S. MacIver.
Second-Lieutenant S. Greeves. Second-Lieutenant H. Lewis.
Second-Lieutenant H. Redfearn.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major R. Maskell.

Military Medal

Lance-Serjeant F. Eastham. Private A. Ashby.
Private J. Boardman. Private R. J. Boynton.
Private A. Gukenbiehl. Private A. Patton.
Private J. Smith. Private J. W. Twist.

"FIRST SOMME, 1918," "FIRST BAPAUME 1918," "FIRST ARRAS, 1918"

1st/5th, 1st/7th and 1st/8th Battalions

The next units of the Regiment to take part in the battle were the 125th (Lancashire Fusiliers) Infantry Brigade, consisting now of the 1st/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel P. V. Holberton, Manchester Regiment), 1st/7th (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brewis, D.S.O., Welsh Regiment) and 1st/8th (Major M. G. Bird in temporary command) Battalions. They had for some months served in sectors 1ST/5TH, 1ST/7TH AND 1ST/8TH BNS.

north and south of the La Bassée Canal. They were relieved (the 1st/7th by the 2nd 5th) in the middle of February, 1918, for a month of rest and training a few miles south of Béthune. The summons came on 23rd March when the battalions embussed and moved by way of St. Pol, Doullens and Beaumetz to Adinfer Wood, bivouacking for the night in the old gun-pits and trenches on its eastern side which had been occupied by the Germans as their second line up to the time of their retreat to the Hindenburg Line in March, 1917. The day had been hot and the night cold and frosty. Early on 24th March reconnaissances were carried out with a view to counter-attacking in a south-easterly direction from Ablainzeville if required or to taking up a position on the Ablainzeville ridge. But later in the morning a warning order was received that the 125th Brigade would be required to relieve troops of another division farther forward. At 2.30 p.m. accordingly the battalions marched to Logeast Wood, where they bivouacked for several hours. Late in the evening further orders were received that the brigade would not relieve other troops but be diverted to clear up a very obscure situation round Béhagnies and Sapignies. At 10 p.m. the 1st/5th Battalion was ordered to send out patrols to make good those two villages before the brigade attempted to establish itself to the east of them. No. 11 and No. 12 Platoons, under Lieutenant J. K. S. Page, carried out the task and reported soon after midnight that the villages were clear of the enemy. The brigade then moved forward, handicapped to some extent by the glare thrown up by burning dumps of ammunition, which exposed the moving troops to the view of the enemy. It was not encouraging for it to have to pass lines of field guns firing with their teams close at hand, ready for retirement at short notice. In the end the situation was found to be so obscure that, as a precaution against any eventuality, at least one battalion fixed bayonets for the last stage of the advance. Fortunately the ground was familiar as the brigade had rested in the area in 1917. By 4 a.m. on 25th March the brigade had occupied a position with the 1st/7th on the right covering the south-west and south of Sapignies, the 1st/5th on the left covering the east of Sapignies and the east and north of Béhagnies, and the 1st/8th in support in some trenches running south and north about 1,500 yards behind those two villages.

Soon events developed. The troops on the left of the 125th Brigade were attacked at 6 a.m. : the 1st/5th helped to drive the enemy back, but remnants of many regiments came streaming back through it and the 1st/8th. The Commanding Officer (Major M. G. Bird) and adjutant (Captain E. Fairhurst) of the latter helped to stop these stragglers and to collect them, ably supported by Regimental Serjeant-Major A. E. Waller of the 1st/7th. The Germans put down a heavy barrage on the whole of the ground occupied by the brigade ; and at 8 a.m. the enemy was seen to be massing in front of Mory, about a mile and a half north-east of Béhagnies. Forty minutes later reports came in that he was massing

near Favreuil also, on the other flank. Half an hour after that "D" Company (Captain A. B. Sackett, M.C.) of the 1st/5th reported that the Germans were advancing over the ridge between Sapignies and Favreuil, but out of rifle and Lewis-gun range, and were establishing themselves in the sunken road linking them, though they were partly hidden by a screen of smoke and gas sent over by the German artillery all along the line of the battalion, which received little artillery support throughout the day. By 10.5 a.m. the attackers had worked round the 1st/5th's right flank and "D" Company had been driven back with the loss of many casualties, including Sackett, who was wounded. The 1st/8th were called upon to help. This battalion had suffered considerably from the bombardment. But Bird and Fairhurst collected all available men of the battalion headquarters and delivered a dashing counter-attack which drove back the leading German troops and established a position in a trench in front of a copse to the east of Sapignies. Bird was severely wounded: four men volunteered to carry him in and succeeded in bringing him safely back. Captain G. W. Sutton then assumed command of the battalion. At about 10.50 a.m. the enemy advanced in mass against the centre of the 1st/5th, held by "B" Company (Lieutenant S. North) whose posts held their ground, Private J. Carney doing great execution with his Lewis gun which he brought up to a critical point. Company Serjeant-Major F. W. Calvert also helped to save the situation by directing the fire of his company headquarters on a German machine gun which had worked round to his right rear and silencing it. (Later he went forward under heavy fire and picked off snipers who were creeping up to his company's positions.) An appeal for artillery support had however to be made. Shortly after, Lieutenant-Colonel Holberton went forward to see the situation for himself, taking with him Second-Lieutenant E. W. Rose, of the 1st/8th, in case the latter was needed to contribute to a further counter-attack. While he was away, his adjutant (Captain E. E. Jenkins, M.C.) received word from "B" Company that the Germans were round their right flank. Jenkins scraped together such men as he could find from his own headquarters and from the stragglers of other regiments and, with Lieutenant H. R. Waugh, the battalion Lewis-gun officer, led them forward over the open. They ran into heavy fire: Jenkins was killed and his little force scattered; and though Waugh attempted to carry through the counter-attack, he was forced to withdraw, taking with him a German machine gun as some compensation for a slight wound and temporary stunning. In the meanwhile, Lieutenant-Colonel Holberton, helped by Rose, had organized another counter-attack by two companies of the 1st/8th which he personally led forward, and, in spite of strong opposition by the enemy who were in strength, succeeded in re-establishing the line on the southern outskirts of Sapignies. Corporal R. Cowell, of the 1st/8th, showed great skill and gallantry during this phase: he was severely wounded but stayed with his men and, by his example and encouragement, enabled them to hold their own.

From early morning on this day the 1st/7th on the brigade's right flank had had a very gruelling time, fighting many ding-dong battles on the ridge which runs south and south-west from Sapignies, and earning many honours under the able and inspiring leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brewis, D.S.O. Captain A. W. Boyd, M.C., commanding "A" Company, was wounded early in the morning, as was his second-in-command: Second-Lieutenant J. E. Ashworth immediately took over command and hung on to his position under heavy fire. Lieutenant H. Gould collected scattered troops from other units, took over command of a company which had lost all its officers, organized it and led it forward through a heavy barrage to reinforce a hard-pressed sector of the line. When another battalion withdrew through his position and its commanding officer ordered him to retire, he flatly refused to do so except on Brewis's instructions. Lieutenant H. L. Murgatroyd took over command of "C" Company when Captain L. Morrison, M.C., was killed and handled it in the most gallant and skilful manner. Another who promptly shouldered higher responsibilities was Serjeant J. G. Ellis, who took command of his company when all his officers had been knocked out and not only reorganized parties of men who had lost their leaders but with great coolness and determination defended his position until he was wounded. Lieutenant C. Kershaw organized and most gallantly led a counter-attack which drove the enemy out of a part of his line in which they had obtained a footing and then, as in later phases of prolonged operations, skilfully reorganized the position. "B" Company was in the good hands of Captain B. Shelmerdine, who set such a fine example of leadership that his sector held firm until a withdrawal was ordered. One of his subalterns, Second-Lieutenant A. Elliott, M.C., won the Distinguished Service Order—a rare award to so junior an officer for outstanding bravery and good work. Some men on Elliott's right flank were being driven in: he ran over to them under heavy machine-gun fire, rallied them and inflicted very heavy losses on the enemy by firing a Lewis gun himself. He deemed it wise, however, to withdraw the party he had rescued; and he covered their move with nine or ten men of his own, ordered the retirement of these latter and in turn covered their withdrawal himself with one man. Later, the troops on his right were again driven back; but he held on for three hours although practically surrounded and under heavy enfilade fire. Finally he led his men in a dash for the lines of another unit with which he fought for the rest of the day. The junior ranks were not behind in initiative. Lance-Corporal E. Frimstone took his Lewis gun forward, without waiting for orders, to an advanced position from which he could enfilade the enemy and stayed there, doing excellent work in spite of heavy fire (of which he seemed to take no notice), until ordered to retire by his company commander. Company Serjeant-Major C. W. Hall, who on his last leave had been given a steel-lined waistcoat by his wife and in the face of much friendly chaff had carried out his promise to her that he would always wear it, survived three hits by

shrapnel bullets and was mainly responsible for his company beating off a series of attacks during the morning of this unforgettable day. Throughout it his courage and determination were of the greatest help when all but one of the officers of his company had become casualties. Although eleven N.C.Os. and men of the 1st/7th won the Military Medal for their share in this magnificent defence, only one more individual can be mentioned here: Private T. T. Petrie rallied two sections which were in difficulties and brought them to the flank of a trench threatened by an encircling movement by the Germans. His party defended the trench for a considerable time; and when the enemy, by sheer weight of numbers, forced their way into it, he placed himself between them and his own men and covered the withdrawal of the latter, inflicting heavy losses on the attackers and being the last to leave the trench.

At about 12.30 p.m. the Germans attacked in large numbers about 1,000 yards north of Béhagnies; and three-quarters of an hour later the 1st/7th had to report the presence of strong enemy forces on their right flank and of columns of infantry seen marching south-west of Vaulx-Vraucourt, while the 1st/5th heard that the Germans had entered Bihucourt, nearly two miles behind their position. The brigade, being thus threatened from several sides, was ordered to withdraw to a position on the ridge between Behagnies and Gomiecourt. The 1st 7th were able to disengage and retire with comparative ease, thanks to the skill of the leaders who had so distinguished themselves in the morning and to Lieutenant R. R. Brewis who collected and organized scattered parties of other units and thus strengthened the new line. The 1st 5th were not so fortunate. The Germans had worked round both its flanks and were firing into it from behind. "A" Company (Captain G. Gray) was surrounded; it fought splendidly till its ammunition was exhausted; and then a serjeant and a dozen men managed to slip away, a few were taken prisoner, and the rest had to be left, dead or wounded, where they lay. "C" Company (Captain W. M. Tickler, M.C.) never received the order to withdraw and hung on till 3 p.m. when, finding that both its flanks were in the air and that it was being heavily fired on from the village of Béhagnies behind it, it was skilfully extricated by its commander with slight casualties. "B" Company lost half its strength: some of the survivors attached themselves to "C" Company while the rest were led by North to fight alongside another unit until he was able to rejoin his own. "C" Company now found itself acting as rear guard to the brigade and performed its task most successfully. It was helped at the outset by the self-sacrifice of a platoon of "C" Company of the 1st/8th under Second-Lieutenant G. Massey which took up a position astride the road leading from Sapignies to Gomiecourt and was last seen fighting gallantly at close quarters against greatly superior numbers. Private F. West of the 1st/8th covered the withdrawal of his own platoon by taking up a position with his Lewis gun in the open and delivering such a hot fire at the advancing Germans that

he inflicted heavy casualties on them and frustrated their out-flanking movement. Later in the operations he was wounded but continued to work his gun until he collapsed through loss of blood. Serjeant W. Morris of the same battalion was also conspicuous for his handling of his Lewis gun, with which he did great execution on the advancing hordes.

Shortly before 4 p.m. the remnants of the brigade had taken up a line on the Comiecourt ridge with the 1st 5th and 1st 7th in front and the 1st 8th in support. Company Serjeant-Majors R. Shaw and W. Fletcher, both of the 1st 8th, did useful work at this stage, the former taking over command of his company when all the officers had become casualties, rallying the men and leading them to their place on the ridge after a personal reconnaissance of the ground ; and the latter collecting stragglers and using them to fill a gap in the line and bringing Lewis-gun fire to bear on a party of the enemy which was trying to occupy a hut in view of his post. Second-Lieutenant E. W. Rose of the 1st 8th again distinguished himself ; he had been taken prisoner earlier in the day, but managed to escape and rejoin his unit on the ridge. Lance-Serjeant J. L. Kneale, of the same battalion, also rejoined later in the day, having been cut off with eighteen men and two Lewis guns in a position in which he held out until dusk when, with great skill and determination, he brought his party away with small loss and reported to his company commander at midnight after a very fine performance. The adjutant of the 1st 8th, Captain E. Fairhurst, had been of the greatest help, as indeed he was throughout these operations, showing a grip of the situation and an example of courage and leadership which earned the highest praise.

The brigade had already lost heavily, the casualties having been 9 officers and 230 other ranks in the 1st 5th and 9 officers and 210 other ranks in the 1st 8th up to the evening of the 25th. The situation on the flanks worsened during the evening and orders were issued for a further withdrawal, to a position in support between Ablainzeville and Logeast Wood, to be begun by the 1st 8th at 2 a.m. on 26th March. But by midnight the brigade's position had become precarious. The 1st 7th was very scattered and communications between battalion headquarters and its companies broke down, so that the latter were at the mercy of rumours of cancelled orders and reports of retirements on their flanks. It had indeed to deliver a counter-attack, ably led by Second-Lieutenant J. E. Ashworth, to relieve the pressure before a withdrawal could be begun. The 1st 5th found that the unit on its left had disappeared without warning, leaving a gap of some eight hundred yards in which a strong post was established as soon as possible. A few minutes after 1.30 a.m. the enemy charged a party of the Middlesex Regiment which lay in front of the 1st 5th's position and apparently wiped it out ; for they advanced on the 1st 5th. The brunt of the attack was borne by "C" Company, which opened a heavy fire and succeeded in stopping the rush, but only by almost

entirely exhausting its stock of ammunition. During this phase, Lieutenant-Colonel Holberton moved to and fro in the open amongst the men, encouraging them by his presence and advising them as to how best to nurse their rounds and to use them to advantage. His gallant conduct, and his life, were ended by a stray machine-gun bullet shortly before 2 a.m. Tickler took command of the battalion temporarily, but immediately sent for Lieutenant-Colonel Brewis of the 1st/7th, who was commanding the whole of the forward troops and who decided to withdraw at once. At 2.10 a.m. the brigade began its retirement, covered by "C" Company of the 1st 5th, a burning tank in Logeast Wood giving useful guidance. Five minutes later a force of Germans tried to rush the company; but only a few reached its position and they were immediately killed. Some were seen working round the left flank. Lieutenant J. K. S. Page with a platoon rushed over in that direction and held them up. He stayed in position while the rest of the company began an orderly retirement by sections. Company Serjeant-Major J. Fisher, M.M., showed conspicuous gallantry during the retirement, controlling the men with coolness and complete disregard of danger; when some of the enemy charged and were about to bayonet a Lewis-gunner who was changing a magazine, he killed them. Serjeant J. Taylor helped the withdrawal by superintending the firing of two Lewis guns which effectively checked the Germans' advance. Serjeant J. Rowen handled his platoon very skilfully in this difficult operation and himself fired a Lewis gun until ordered to retire. Serjeant G. H. Barnes was detailed to cover the company's withdrawal, which he did most gallantly, beating off the German pressure. He then moved his platoon back by sections with few casualties, took up a fresh position and again kept the enemy off his company with great coolness.

The whole brigade reached its appointed position soon after 3 a.m. and enjoyed a few hours of rest. But at 6 a.m. the enemy were again at hand and yet another withdrawal was necessary if the 1st/7th was not to be caught in Logeast Wood. Orders were therefore issued for the brigade to move to a line about 1,500 yards east of les-Essarts-les-Bucquoy. While this move was in progress, a report (false as it proved) was received that the Germans had taken the village of Hébuterne, which lay some three miles behind the right of the intended position. The brigade was therefore ordered to take up the best line it could find covering Essarts from the south-west with the least possible delay. This involved a change of the direction in which the units had been facing; but by 1 p.m. some sort of line had been occupied and partly dug. The rest of the day was quiet, and the brigade was able to reorganize in the position originally ordered. Major G. S. Castle, M.C., came up to take over command of the 1st/5th and Lieutenant-Colonel O. St. L. Davies rejoined the 1st/8th from leave. The fighting strength of the brigade at this time was about 34 officers and 880 N.C.Os. and men, including brigade headquarters.

During the night of 20th/27th March, orders were issued to prepare for a still further withdrawal, but they were afterwards cancelled and a quiet night was enjoyed. The next day, 27th, was devoted to consolidating the support position which the brigade occupied, and to rest. The Germans attacked the front line, but the brigade was not involved until late in the evening when, in consequence of a report that the enemy had broken through east of Ayette, the 1st 8th sent out patrols to clear up the situation and two companies of the 1st 7th were placed at the disposal of the 127th Brigade; later two companies of the 1st 8th were ordered to be ready to support the 126th Brigade if needed. Early on 28th the patrols of the 1st 8th reported that there was no cause for alarm as the Ayette valley was clear of enemy and the front line was intact in that direction. A few hours later, however, a German attack developed on the front of the 127th Brigade and the two companies of the 1st 7th were ordered forward as reinforcements. The bombardment which heralded this attack caused some casualties to the brigade, particularly in the 1st 5th. The situation looked so threatening that, at 11.25 a.m., the 1st 7th were ordered to send their remaining companies to the help of the 127th Brigade and to occupy the sunken by-road which led from Bucquoy to Douchy-les-Ayette. By 2.30 p.m. the whole of the 1st/7th had established itself in this position, but was not called upon to take any further action, as the attack on the 127th Brigade was met in the open and driven back. It was, however, necessary to relieve the troops in the front line and this was accomplished that night, the brigade taking over a sector round the eastern outskirts of Bucquoy. The day of 20th March was quiet, except that the 1st 7th were again called upon to move, this time to the support of 126th Brigade which was attacked but which was able to drive the Germans back without help. After internal reliefs on the evening of that day and a good deal of shelling on 30th, the brigade was finally relieved on 31st March and assembled in the old German trench system near Gommecourt, whose capacious and well-arranged dug-outs provided a fair measure of security and comfort.

The decorations awarded specifically or mainly for these operations were as follows:—

Bar to Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brewis, D.S.O., 1st/7th.

Distinguished Service Order

Major M. G. Bird, 1st 8th

Second-Lieutenant A. Elliott, M.C., 1st/7th.

Bar to Military Cross

Captain W. M. Tickler, M.C., 1st/5th.

Military Cross

Captain E. Fairhurst, 1st/8th.
Captain B. Shelmerdine, 1st/7th.
Lieutenant R. R. Brewis, 1st/7th.
Lieutenant C. Kershaw, 1st/7th.
Lieutenant J. K. S. Page, 1st/5th.
Second Lieutenant J. E. Ashworth, 1st/7th.
Captain A. M. Johnson, R.A.M.C., attached to 1st/5th.
Lieutenant H. Gould, 1st/7th.
Lieutenant H. L. Murgatroyd, 1st/7th.
Lieutenant H. R. Waugh, 1st/5th.
Second Lieutenant E. W. Rose, 1st/8th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major F. W. Calvert, 1st/5th.
Company Serjeant-Major W. Fletcher, 1st/8th.
Company Serjeant-Major R. Shaw, 1st/8th.
Serjeant J. L. Kneale, 1st/8th.
Serjeant J. Taylor, 1st/5th.
Lance-Corporal E. Frimstone, 1st/7th.
Private T. T. Petrie, 1st/7th.
Company Serjeant-Major J. Fisher, M.M., 1st/5th.
Company Serjeant-Major C. W. Hall, 1st/7th.
Serjeant G. H. Barnes, 1st/5th.
Serjeant J. G. Ellis, 1st/7th.
Serjeant J. Rowen, 1st/5th.
Corporal R. Cowell, 1st/8th.
Private J. Carney, 1st/5th.
Private F. West, 1st/8th.

Military Medal

Serjeant J. Appleton, 1st/7th.
Serjeant W. Morris, 1st/8th.
Corporal F. Smethurst, 1st/5th.
Lance-Corporal H. Blackburn, 1st/5th.
Private J. Berry, 1st/7th.
Private T. Carter, 1st/8th.
Private J. Dimmock, 1st/5th.
Private H. Holman, 1st/7th.
Private W. Linsey, 1st/5th.
Private A. Morris, 1st/5th.
Private F. Robinson, 1st/8th.
Serjeant T. Broe, 1st/7th.
Serjeant J. Richmond, 1st/8th.
Corporal C. Weilding, 1st/7th.
Lance-Corporal H. Drinkwater, 1st/8th.
Private J. Blomley, 1st/7th.
Private J. Clarke, 1st/5th.
Private G. Heardley, 1st/7th.
Private G. Hull, 1st/7th.
Private A. Moore, 1st/7th.
Private A. Peover, 1st/8th.
Private W. Rogers, 1st/7th.
Private H. Welden, 1st/7th.

A Magnificent Stand

Second-Lieutenant B. M. Cassidy's V.C.

"FIRST SOMME, 1918" "FIRST ARRAS, 1918."

2nd Battalion

Although the 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. Watkins, M.C.) was almost the last battalion of the Regiment, in point of time, to be drawn into the struggle of March, 1918, it was by no means last in what it did, in the gallantry which it displayed, or in the renown which it earned. 2ND BN.

The battalion had been in the Arras district, which it knew so well, for some months. After several weeks of rest and training, it moved to billets in Arras on 11th March, 1918; and thence on 19th March to a position in brigade reserve at St. Laurent Blangy, "D" Company (Captain G. N. Stange) being placed farther forward in Lemon Trench, north of Fampoux. Five days later the battalion moved into the support positions which it was to hold so gallantly on 28th and 29th March. The lines formed a cross of which the arms ran north-east to south-west and south-east to north-west, the intersection being about 1,250 yards north of Fampoux. The north-east-south-west arm consisted of Civil Avenue and Humid Trench (held by "A" Company under Second-Lieutenant B. M. Cassidy), Harry Trench and Hussar Trench (held by "D" Company) and Hudson Alley (held by part of "B" Company under Second-Lieutenant A. Howarth). The other arms consisted of Hyderabad Trench (held by the remainder of "B" Company) and of Trent Trench (held by "C" Company under Captain T. H. Robinson).

Civil Avenue led to the front line, some 1,000 yards away, and "A" Company's position therefore jutted out in a pronounced manner from the rest of the battalion. The unit knew the ground thoroughly as it had fought hard near Fampoux in the Battle of Arras of 1917 and had contributed to the capture of the area which it now occupied. It was consequently with considerable resentment that it learnt on 26th March that, if the Germans continued their advance farther south, it was intended to withdraw to a line closely covering Fampoux itself in order to avoid the creation of a dangerous salient. Some preparations for a retirement were in fact made, such as the thinning out of the artillery and the evacuation of a proportion of the bombs and ammunition of the battalion. If the German attack had been delivered two days later than it was, the 2nd Battalion would have had to bear the biggest share of any withdrawal, as it was to have relieved the 2nd Essex Regiment in the front line on 29th March; and reconnaissances to that end were carried out.

But it was on 28th March, 1918, that Ludendorff launched a mass attack north of Arras which, by capturing the Vimy Ridge, was designed to give him more space for his operations and to give him far-reaching results in a new direction to compensate him for the arresting of his advance farther south. It may without exaggeration be claimed that the failure of this fresh effort, to which the Germans attached such hopes that they carried six days' rations in their equipment, was due in no small measure to the magnificent fight put up by the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers and in particular by Second-Lieutenant Bernard Michael Cassidy.

The enemy opened an intense bombardment with his artillery and trench mortars over a wide front at 3 a.m. on 28th March. (It was the same bombardment which necessitated the movement of the 1st/7th Battalion to support the 127th Infantry Brigade thirteen miles to the south at Bucquoy.) At 5.50 a.m. the 56th (London) Division, on the immediate left of the 2nd Battalion, sent up the "S O S"; and at 6.30 a.m. a report was received that the Germans were cutting the wire protecting the British front line. Soon after 7 a.m. the German infantry attacked, wave after wave in close formation. The full force fell on the 2nd Essex Regiment in the front line. They fought magnificently; but, taking advantage of the early morning mist which still lingered in a hollow, the Germans passed their left flank and got in behind them. Lieutenant-Colonel Watkins received a message from the Essex stating that they were being attacked and ordered his battalion to man their battle stations. Then, satisfied that his own position was secure, he went forward to gain such information as he could of the enemy's activities, and visited each company in turn. No further word came from the front line, except from wounded men, till the commanding officer and fifty men of the Essex fell back to Hudson Alley at about 9 a.m. with the news that his battalion had been overwhelmed. It had indeed been surrounded and submerged by sheer weight of

numbers and had lost 15 officers and about 600 men. The Germans followed up slowly, but it was soon evident that there was a risk of their penetrating the right of the support position. Lieutenant-Colonel Watkins therefore commandeered the services of "C" Company (Captain T. Pritchard, M.C.) of the 1st King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment and placed it in Hyderabad Support Trench. The Germans had by now re-formed and they could be clearly seen advancing in massed formation with artillery close behind them. Others of them made their way forward in large numbers along the communication trenches which linked the front line with the support system. By about 10 a.m. they had bombed their way down a communication trench which led to the junction of Humid Trench and Harry Trench, thus taking the exposed "A" Company in rear and separating it from "D" Company. A strenuous attempt was made to eject them, but without success though they must have suffered heavy losses.

There followed the most heroic fighting by "A" and "D" Companies. Stange, of the latter, unable to get in touch with "A," hurriedly had a barricade erected in Hussar Trench and organized a fierce resistance in which bombs and bayonets were freely used. Such were his energy and reckless bravery that the Germans were unable to make any further progress in this direction. Meanwhile, Cassidy, whose "A" Company had already suffered considerable losses and had wellnigh exhausted its supply of bombs, was organizing his last fight. Cut off from "D" by the Germans who had advanced past his right front, he found that large numbers of the enemy were also coming up on his left flank. He was practically surrounded. The only way by which he could possibly have extricated his command would have been by leading them across the open to Trent Trench. He moved up and down Humid Trench, cheering his men, making arrangements for this daring movement and supervising the defence of the ground he held. All the while he was in touch with Lieutenant-Colonel Watkins by telephone as the bombardment had not cut the buried cable leading from the companies to battalion headquarters. He sent frequent reports of the situation, until his voice was heard to say "Here they are, right on me." Then came silence. His other two officers, Second-Lieutenants J. Heron and B. J. B. Butler-Bowden, fell a few minutes later; and no more than six unwounded men of "A" Company escaped. But their heroic self-sacrifice, inspired and organized by Cassidy, unquestionably held up the whole German attack at this point and saved the left flank of the 4th Division from what might have been a disaster. This was the view of those in authority, for it was in those terms that the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to this very gallant officer was announced.

The Germans made repeated bombing attacks along Hussar Trench; but they were all repulsed by "B" and "D" Companies, with the valuable help of "C" Company of the King's Own. Private W. H. Roscoe, of "B," handled his Lewis gun with such effect that

he mowed the Germans down time after time. Once they were only twenty yards from his post and he was surrounded; but, quite undaunted, he kept up such a devastating fire that they were completely driven away from that part of the front. Company Serjeant-Major J. Baines, of "D," rendered valuable help at this stage. One of the platoon commanders was wounded; whereupon Baines took command, rallied the men and drove the enemy back. His initiative and courageous example contributed greatly to the stand made by the company. The battalion had been told that it was not to yield an inch; and officers and men could be seen lying on the parapet of the trenches shooting down Germans as fast as they could handle their rifles. A few of the enemy got into the trenches at one or two points, but they were quickly dealt with by the bayonet. Some succeeded in getting into an old redoubt close to Hyderabad Trench; but after a stiff fight they too were driven out, leaving many dead and several machine guns. Blocks were erected in the trenches on the flanks of the battalion's position and by 12 noon the line had been firmly consolidated in Hyderabad and Trent Trenches. Then, and not till then, did Lieutenant-Colonel Watkins, who had spent the morning in the forward positions, co-ordinating the defence and encouraging all ranks by his cheerfulness, go back to battalion headquarters and send through to the brigadier the most reassuring and accurate information which had yet reached him.

During the afternoon the 10 per cent. reserves left behind by each unit of the division were formed into a provisional battalion and sent up to support the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, together with another improvised unit, consisting of the pioneer battalion, the three field companies and other personnel, under the Commander of the Royal Engineers of the division. But their services were not needed, although "B" Company had a hard struggle after dusk to retain its hold on Hyderabad Trench. Touch was lost with the 11th Infantry Brigade on the right (commanded by Brigadier-General T. S. H. Wade, D.S.O., a former commanding officer of the 10th Battalion), owing to the persistent attempts of the enemy to force a way along Clyde Avenue, a communication trench which led into the extreme right of Hyderabad. Second-Lieutenant W. F. Lilley, M.M., led a patrol to gain touch with the unit on the right and found the Germans already established in Havana Trench, which was a continuation of Hyderabad Trench to the south-east. The company commander, Howarth, reported this through "C" Company's telephone and got a message from Lieutenant-Colonel Watkins: "Hang on, you are doing splendidly." Howarth himself led parties to the threatened flank and succeeded in gaining touch with a company of the 1st Rifle Brigade which General Wade had sent to fill the gap as soon as he learnt of it. Touch was never again lost. Howarth was greatly helped by his company serjeant-major, E. A. North, who kept up a constant supply of bombs and set a most encouraging example of coolness to all ranks.

The battalion was greatly cheered by the welcome arrival of the quartermaster (Lieutenant-Colonel W. Bowes, D.S.O.), and the transport officer (Lieutenant A. R. Topping) with rations which included hot soup and an issue of rum.

Unfortunately, things had not gone so well farther south and the 11th Brigade had been forced to fall back slightly. It was obviously impossible for the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers to maintain its position with its right flank uncovered. Orders were therefore issued for its line to be swung back to conform with that of the 11th Brigade. At about midnight the battalion took up its new position with its "B" Company and "C" Company of the King's Own on the right in Hudson Alley and Stoke Trench, which ran southwards at right-angles from it; "D" Company in Tripoli Trench, which continued Stoke Trench to the north and finally joined Trent Trench; and "C" Company, with about fifty survivors of the Essex Regiment, in Trent Trench. In effect, the battalion had pivoted on its left flank, and on the extreme right had had to fall back about 1,000 yards. This adjustment was effected without loss. Blocks were established at all points at which the enemy could enter the new position; but they were completed only just before dawn. The battalion, with its attached details, had now become the front-line unit. All ranks were thoroughly exhausted and fully expected a further attack; but they awaited it with confidence and a determination to fight to the last—indeed, all secret papers were destroyed in readiness for the worst. A large-scale attack did not, however, materialize, though the enemy delivered a determined bombing attack at dawn on 29th on the position held by "B" Company in Hudson Alley. Thanks largely to Howarth's energy, it was unsuccessful, and a prisoner of the 189th Reserve Infantry Regiment and a machine gun were captured. A similar attack against "D" Company also cost the Germans a machine gun.

At 9 a.m. bombing attacks of a much heavier nature came simultaneously from Hussar Trench, Hyderabad Trench and Troy Trench, which ran behind and parallel to Hyderabad. These lasted till noon and were difficult to stop owing to the acute shortage of bombs which had arisen. Nevertheless, Howarth's "B" Company, with "C" Company and the attached company of the King's Own, kept the enemy at bay. Lance-Corporal H. Airey, of "C," was of great help in breaking up one such attack. He fired his Lewis gun from a shell hole for a long time. Once it jammed, but he put it right with the utmost coolness and resumed rapid fire just as a party of the enemy were coming close upon him. Corporal G. L. Clayton, of the same company, led a bombing party and fearlessly beat back a party of Germans, after which he held a block with two other men for three hours. Finally Howarth gave the artillery the map reference of the junction of Hussar Alley and Hyderabad Trench and, at a prearranged time, withdrew his men for about ten minutes while the 18-pounders gave the Germans a good hammering.

After this the attacks ceased for the day. They were renewed the next day, 30th March, with great determination but no better success. On the night 30th/31st March the battalion was relieved by the King's Own and withdrew into support in Missouri, Mississippi and Effie Trenches, about one thousand yards in rear of the positions they had so splendidly held.

During the three days' fighting the battalion lost 2 officers and 16 other ranks killed, 2 officers and 87 other ranks wounded and 1 officer and 120 other ranks missing. Of the latter, many were known to have been wounded or killed and almost all belonged to the gallant "A" Company. The decorations awarded to the battalion were as follows :—

Victoria Cross

Second-Lieutenant B. M. Cassidy.

Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. Watkins, M.C.

Military Cross

Captain G. N. Stange. Second-Lieutenant A. Howarth.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major E. A. North. Company Serjeant-Major J. Baines.
Corporal G. L. Clayton. Lance-Corporal H. Airey.
Private W. H. Roscoe.

Military Medal

Serjeant A. Bryan. Corporal A. Carter.
Lance-Corporal F. T. Haworth. Lance-Corporal R. Kenyon.
Lance-Corporal R. Sladdin. Private J. Bennett.
Private H. Blackledge. Private W. Booth.
Private J. Jesse. Private T. Johnson.
Private T. Jones. Private T. Lackey.
Private H. C. Pontet. Private A. Walker.
Private R. Woods. Private S. Wood.
Private E. J. Wooldridge.

A Typical Episode of the March Retreat

It will have been appreciated from the descriptions given earlier in this chapter of parts of the operations at the end of March, 1918, that the casualties were so heavy that complete units were sometimes wiped out, that there was considerable confusion and inevitable loss of contact and control, and that dangerous gaps in the line frequently occurred. As an example of the expedients to which the authorities had to resort in filling those gaps may be quoted the experiences of Major F. R. Logan, of the 1st Battalion, who held the appointment of Chief Instructor of the Fifth Army Musketry School when the German offensive opened.

He was ordered to take his permanent staff up to the scene of operations, together with the staff from several other schools. With this motley party, he filled a gap in the line near Hamel, and defended a bridge until he was nearly surrounded, thus enabling a casualty clearing station behind him to be evacuated. He then extricated his party and withdrew through the marshes near the

bridge. Picking up some stragglers and a number of convalescent men of all regiments who had been in the hospital, he took up another position which this little force held for fourteen days, beating off several attacks and inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. Logan set a splendid example to his men, almost all of them strangers to him and to each other, and on one occasion, when the line on his right was giving way, steadied them to such effect that his position remained intact. When they were finally relieved by a brigade of the 16th (Irish) Division, his command consisted of 13 officers of at least eight different regiments, 21 N.C.Os. of the Fifth Army Musketry School, 33 convalescents and 128 stragglers of various units. The request for their relief, addressed to the 16th Division, began with the words: "Herewith list of officers and other ranks which it is believed are now in your portion of the front line." Major Logan received the Military Cross for his services during these operations.

Local Counter-operations at Ayette

"FIRST SOMME, 1918"

15th and 16th Battalions

The last two representatives of the Regiment to be involved in the great battle were the two Salford units, the 15th and 16th Battalions. The latter moved down from Houthulst Forest on 28th March, and took over a sector of the line near Ayette on 31st March. There had been heavy fighting in this area and the defences had become considerably disorganized. The situation was particularly obscure in Ayette itself, where the enemy was said to have a machine gun in the village and some posts to the east of it, though other reports affirmed that he occupied it with patrols only. The 96th Brigade was therefore ordered to find out the true facts. On the night of 31st March/1st April, three parties of the 16th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. Gillon) entered Ayette from the south, but were held up by machine-gun fire and a barricade and compelled to withdraw. "C" Company of the same battalion attacked German posts south of the village at 2 a.m. on 2nd April, but had to withdraw as its left flank was seriously enfiladed. At 9 a.m. on 3rd April, "D" Company resumed the attacks and captured two posts, consolidating the ground taken. Its right had, however, to content itself with digging in in front of posts which the enemy still held in spite of three attempts at storming them under cover of a barrage provided by trench mortars. "B" Company made a further effort at 9 p.m. the same day, launching two strong parties under Second-Lieutenant J. McClymont, M.C., and Second-Lieutenant S. Vasey, with a platoon under Second-Lieutenant J. W. Riley acting as "moppers-up," to clear a sunken road south of the village. The operation was successful: the enemy were driven out of the road, and three machine guns were captured. Vasey then pushed boldly

15TH AND 16TH BNS.

16TH BN.

on to a distance of three hundred yards beyond his objective and established a screen under the protection of which "A" Company (Captain F. F. Waugh) constructed a line of eight posts several hundred yards in advance of the line originally held by the battalion. These were firmly consolidated. The casualties had been heavy in these operations, amounting to 2 officers and 8 men killed, 5 officers and 55 other ranks wounded, and 17 men missing. Second-Lieutenant S. Vasey was awarded the Military Cross for his work.

15TH BN. Two nights later, at 10 p.m. on 5th April, a platoon of "D" Company of the 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. K. Utterson, D.S.O.) under Second-Lieutenant L. C. B. Chester and Second-Lieutenant H. A. Davis raided a German post about three-quarters of a mile south of Ayette. In spite of considerable rifle and machine-gun fire from the garrison, which appeared to number about a hundred, the raiders rushed into the trench and bombed up it for about two hundred yards, inflicting many casualties. Davis then established a block pending the arrival of a supporting platoon. Soon after, however, the Germans delivered a strong counter-attack down the trench. In view of the overwhelming numbers brought against him and in the light of the orders which he had received, Chester ordered his party to withdraw. He saw everybody clear of the German trench, but was killed as he was leaving it himself. Davis also refused to leave the enemy lines till all his men were clear. He received the Military Cross for his gallantry, as did Lieutenant A. G. Edghill, of the 15th, who displayed fearless devotion to duty in providing the trench-mortar support for this raid and the raids of the 16th Battalion on 2nd and 3rd April just described.

The Germans' Last Fling in the South

"FIRST SOMME, 1918," "ANCRE, 1918"

1st/5th, 1st/7th, and 1st/8th Battalions

After its gruelling ordeal in the last week in March, the 125th Infantry Brigade enjoyed a few days of rest at Gommecourt Wood before going on the night of 1st/2nd April to Bucquoy, with 1st/8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel O. St. L. Davies) in the line in front of the village on the right, the 1st/7th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brewis) in the line on the left and the 1st/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel P. A. Clive, D.S.O., M.P., Grenadier Guards) in support behind the village.

At 5 a.m. on 5th April the whole brigade area was subjected to very heavy shelling which included much gas and lasted for three hours. Then, under cover of a hurricane bombardment by heavy trench mortars, the Germans attacked. The brunt of their blow fell on the centre ("A") and left ("B") Companies of the 1st/8th, whose "C" Company was on the right of its front and "D" (Lieutenant H. B. Ivers) in support. "A" and "B" Companies were almost

entirely wiped out, though remnants of "A" succeeded in making their way along a sunken road leading to Bucquoy village, where they suffered further casualties. The 1st 7th were able to hold their ground ; and their right and right centre companies inflicted heavy casualties on the Germans. "C" Company of the 1st/8th was also able to maintain its position in spite of many casualties, thanks largely to the inspiring leadership of Ivers, the only officer left in it, who remained in command although wounded and indeed insisted on staying with his men until he was again severely hit. His company even began to work its way northwards up the trench formerly held by "A" Company, though it was forced to fall back when it became almost surrounded as the result of the retirement of a unit on the right.

At 10.15 a.m. the 1st/5th moved to battle positions. At 11.40 a.m. the 1st/8th were ordered to eject the enemy from the ground he had taken, calling on the 1st/5th for support if necessary. Lieutenant-Colonel Davies thereupon took his "D" Company and all available men at his headquarters and, with the help of two platoons of the 1st/5th under Lieutenant W. Stringer, counter-attacked the village of Bucquoy. Stubborn opposition was met and hand-to-hand fighting took place in the ruins. Davies succeeded, however, in reaching the cross-roads in the village and ordered Stringer to place his platoons along a bank in it. Soon after, Davies was mortally wounded ; and his adjutant, Captain G. W. Sutton, assumed command of the 1st/8th and successfully organized the consolidation of a line which represented the regaining of practically all that had been lost. During this phase, Company Serjeant-Major R. Shaw, who had continued in this operation to show the same fine qualities as he had shown in the fighting of ten days earlier, volunteered to find out the dispositions of the troops on the right ; he went across the open through a heavy artillery and machine-gun barrage and was never seen alive again.

In view of the developments on their flank, the 1st 7th had been compelled to form a defensive flank with their "D" Company (Lieutenant H. Gould), but their position was otherwise intact. At 1.35 p.m. the 1st/5th received an order to send two companies to counter-attack from the right of the 1st/7th and to reoccupy the line originally held by the 1st/8th. Lieutenant-Colonel Clive therefore went over with his second-in-command, Major G. S. Castle, M.C., to the combined headquarters of the 1st/8th Lancashire Fusiliers and the 13th Royal Fusiliers to arrange the details with Captain Sutton. At about 4 p.m. the 1st/7th improved their position by gaining touch with the 1st/8th on their right. Half an hour later, "C" (Captain W. M. Tickler, M.C.) and "D" (Second-Lieutenant H. Jessup) Companies of the 1st/5th went forward to counter-attack on the left under Castle, Lieutenant-Colonel Clive taking other elements of the battalion with him to counter-attack on the right in conjunction with eighty men of the 1st/8th, all that were still available. Second-Lieutenant A. C. Gibbons of the 1st/8th

rallied a number of stragglers and led his unit's share of the attack very gallantly through much shelling and machine-gun fire. The advance was held up at the Bucquoy cross-roads. Sutton went to reconnoitre but, while looking at his map, was seriously wounded. When Lieutenant-Colonel Clive heard of this, he brought forward some stretcher-bearers and came to Sutton to learn the situation on the front of the 1st/8th. As he turned away after getting the information and ensuring that the stretcher-bearers had begun to carry Sutton to the rear, he was killed. Castle, who was now the senior officer in the 1st/5th, had meanwhile gone forward on the left with two platoons of its "C" Company and got in touch with Stringer, who was one hundred and fifty yards west of the Bucquoy–Ablainzeville road and was held up there. Castle ordered the whole line forward in order to establish it on the road itself; after which he went over still farther to the left and ordered Lieutenant J. K. S. Page to push on. He then went over to the 1st/7th to confer with Lieutenant-Colonel Brewis.

Meanwhile, "C" Company of the 1st/5th had advanced to within fifty yards of the road before it was held up by machine guns and snipers. Lance-Serjeant T. Leeming, who had taken over a platoon in the previous action when his officer and serjeant had been hit, led his platoon with great dash through the village and, on gaining his objective, skilfully organized its defence and gained touch with the troops on his right flank. "D" Company, which had come up on the right of "C," had been forced to withdraw from the line it had reached because the British artillery were shelling the cross-roads. Jessup was wounded and Lieutenant H. R. Waugh was sent up from the battle reserve to take over "D" Company. Castle then ordered the residue of the 1st/5th, under North, to take up a position in the village so as to form a defensive flank, with the result that the line, in touch with the 1st/7th, ran due west to the Essarts–Bucquoy road. All three battalions were able to stabilize their positions during the evening and night, though members of battalion headquarters had in all cases to be used to make and man strong posts. The next day was spent in consolidation; on the day after, 7th April, attack preparations were seen, but nothing developed; and the brigade was relieved that night.

As usual in such operations, much depends on the administration and communications of a unit. Throughout the whole anxious ten days in which the 1st/7th was involved in March and April, its transport officer, Captain F. H. Mainprice, had never once failed to get his limbers up to the battalion with its rations. He led his transport personally at night along heavily shelled roads and, largely by his splendid example, got it safely through. He was wounded (and lost an arm) on the eleventh night while returning from the line. Regimental Serjeant-Major A. E. Waller, of the same battalion, was invaluable throughout both actions in helping to deliver rations, ammunition, water and many other things with complete disregard of danger. Mention must also be made of

Private E. Lord, of the 1st/5th, who throughout this period did magnificent work as company signaller and linesman. He constantly mended the wires under heavy fire and so enabled touch to be kept between his company and battalion headquarters. But somehow he found time at one stage to take command of a section when the right flank of his company was completely enveloped and directed its fire with deadly effect, to which he contributed many well-aimed rounds with his own rifle.

The decorations awarded for the fighting between 5th and 8th April, and in some cases also for the action of 25th-28th March, included :—

Distinguished Service Order

Captain G. W. Sutton, 1st/8th.

Military Cross

Captain F. H. Mainprice, 1st/7th.
Lieutenant H. B. Ivers, 1st/8th.
Lieutenant A. C. Gibbons, 1st/8th.
Captain F. S. Bedale, R.A.M.C., attached 1st/8th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Regimental Serjeant-Major A. E. Waller, 1st/7th.
Lance-Serjeant T. Leeming, 1st 5th.
Private E. Lord, 1st/5th.

Military Medal

Company Quartermaster-Serjeant T. E. Acton, 1st/5th.
Corporal W. Davies, 1st/8th.
Corporal W. Monks, 1st/7th.
Private J. Heywood, 1st/5th.
Private W. H. Ogden, 1st/5th.
Serjeant W. H. Davenport, 1st/7th.
Serjeant E. Kirkby, 1st/5th.
Corporal C. Howarth, 1st/5th.
Corporal F. Williams, 1st/7th.
Private T. F. Hopwood, 1st/5th.
Private T. Powell, 1st/5th.
Private H. W. Taylor, 1st/5th.

CHAPTER XIV

1918 (Continued). THE GERMAN ATTACKS IN THE NORTH AND ON THE AISNE. THE SUMMER UP TO THE END OF JULY.

"LYS," "ESTAIRES," "HAZEBROUCK," "FIRST KEMMEL," "BÉTHUNE," "SECOND KEMMEL," "AISNE, 1918"

(Maps 1, 2 & 3)

1st, 2nd, 1st/5th, 2nd 5th, 1st/7th, 1st 8th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th Battalions

THE German offensive which was launched on 21st March, 1918, achieved a spectacular victory in its captures of prisoners, material and ground. But it had not gained any strategically decisive objective; nor had it succeeded in separating the French and British Armies and thus perhaps opening a way to the Channel. Ludendorff had originally considered, as an alternative to the Somme attack, a plan for an offensive in the north, between the Vimy Ridge and Ypres. An advance in this area would threaten the British bases of Calais and Boulogne—and possibly the English coast as well. Moreover, the left of the British front was badly served as regards railways, and a comparatively short thrust into it would leave it with only one lateral line. This plan was rejected for various reasons, including the fact that in most years the ground in the low-lying valleys of the River Lys and its tributaries did not dry up sufficiently for military operations to take place over it till May, whereas Ludendorff wished to open his attack in March. In 1918, however, the spring had been unusually free from rain; and the country between Ypres and La Bassée was much drier than usual by the end of March. The British front had been to a large extent denuded of troops in order to stem the German flood on the Somme, and it was held in many places by divisions which had already passed through a stern and exhausting ordeal in the south. The German High Command, unable to make progress in a decisive direction on the original front of its attack, determined therefore to deliver a fresh blow across the River Lys. Their intention became evident towards the end of March and in the early days of April, when air reconnaissances reported an increasing movement of troops, transport and guns by road and rail towards the line west of Lille. Many straws of confirmation came in, including a map captured on a German officer by the 55th Division (of which Captain G. Surtees, M.C., 2nd/5th Lancashire Fusiliers, was the staff officer responsible for intelligence). This not only showed that the position of divisional headquarters was accurately known to the Germans,

but had on it blue-pencilled arrows penetrating into the British line north-west of Givenchy and turning north-west behind the position held by the Portuguese who lay on the immediate left of the 55th Division.

The new attack was launched on a front of sixteen and a half miles extending from near Armentières in the north to the La Bassée Canal in the south. It began on 9th April, 1918—in a thick mist as in the case of its great predecessor of 21st March—and was made by eight German divisions in the front line and six in the second line, all of them fresh and none of them having taken part in the March battle. It continued until 30th April, having in its progress penetrated the Allied lines to a maximum depth of over eleven miles and extended northwards to Ypres. The operations are known collectively as the Battle of the Lys, and five battalions of the Regiment took part in them.

The Defence of Givenchy, 9th April, 1918

2nd/5th Battalion

"LYS," "ESTAIRES"

The 2nd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O.) moved from the Cambrai district to a training area at Coyecque, ten miles west of Aire, in December, 1917, and on 14th February, 1918, relieved the 1st/7th Battalion south of the La Bassée Canal. It was not until 17th March that it began its first tour of duty in the Givenchy sector, just north of the canal, which it was to know so well for the next six months. The village of Givenchy stands on a slight rise, giving observation in every direction and particularly towards the west. Its retention was therefore of the very highest importance to the defence of the British line on a wide frontage. Its defences were strong and consisted of a well-made forward trench-line, lightly held and backed by a series of support and reserve lines with "switches"—all designed for the protracted defence of the essential points, which were called "keeps." The defence scheme provided for the holding of the "keeps" at all costs and for a number of companies and platoons disposed behind them so as to be able to counter-attack speedily in aid of any "keep" which might be surrounded. 2ND/5TH BN.

On 7th April the 2nd/5th Battalion was relieved in the front line and went into support and reserve, with "A" (Captain W. H. Wild, M.C.), "C" (Captain K. T. Blamey, M.C.) and "D" (Captain J. R. Bodington, M.C.) Companies under the second-in-command, Major P. S. Cookson, in a support system known as the Village Line which ran along the Cambrin–Festubert road just north of the canal, and "B" Company (Captain W. C. Wilkinson) and battalion headquarters in reserve at Gorre.

The German barrage opened so furiously at 4.15 a.m. on 9th April with guns of all calibres and generous doses of gas, especially

on the back areas and on gun positions, that it was evident that the attack was about to be launched. At 5.15 a.m., therefore, the battalion received (by runner, the telephone line from brigade headquarters having been cut by shell fire) an order that "B" Company was to move to the Tuning Fork–Le Préol line, a reserve system running north and south about three-quarters of a mile east of Gorre. At the same time the code word "Bustle" arrived, the signal for everybody to stand to and for battalion headquarters to move up to Pont Fixe. Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten had to send the headquarters forward in small parties and ordered them to go south of the canal so as to avoid the worst of the shelling. At 8.45 a.m. came the German infantry assault. What happened on the front of the Portuguese division which lay on the left of the 55th Division (of which the 2nd/5th formed part) is a matter of controversy. For the purposes of this history it is sufficient to say that there was soon a wide gap on the inner flank of the 55th Division, which was itself attacked by three German divisions. The latter had been given contemptuous accounts of the West Lancashire Division's fighting value, and one regiment even advanced with its band, which was captured, complete with instruments, together with the regimental headquarters. The left brigade of the 55th Division had to swing back on account of the gap left by the Portuguese, and a gap also developed between it and the 164th Infantry Brigade which held Givenchy. The Germans penetrated the front line in many places and infiltrated parties, under cover of the mist, as far as Windy Corner and the neighbourhood of Pont Fixe, both in the Village Line, and some marched even farther behind the line, as will shortly be seen.

At 10 a.m. the battalion's chaplain, the Reverend R. E. G. Newman, M.C., walked into battalion headquarters, asked for a map, took it over to Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten, and explained in the calmest tones that, while he was in the regimental aid post at Windy Corner, the Germans had arrived. Another chaplain who was there began to argue with the Germans as to whether they had the right under international law to take prisoner a minister of religion who was tending the wounded. Under cover of this discussion and of the mist, Newman, after an unsuccessful grab at a German's rifle and bayonet, made a bolt for it and was able to give a very clear and soldierly description of where the enemy were. On the strength of this report, Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten ordered "D" Company to form a defensive flank on the left, while "C" Company was disposed so as to act in support of it. The 1st/4th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, holding the right flank of the brigade sector, reported that the Germans were working down an important trench known as Orchard Road in the centre of their line and asked for reinforcements. Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten ordered "C" Company to send up one platoon, but pointed out that the principal danger at the moment was at Windy Corner, where indeed a furious battle was raging. After putting his company in

position, Bodington made a reconnaissance of the surrounding area and was bombed by some Germans. He promptly made a slight change in his dispositions which succeeded in checking their advance. Second-Lieutenant R. S. Mowle formed a bombing party from the remnants of his platoon, which had suffered many casualties, and after strenuous bombing rushed the enemy with the bayonet, capturing thirty prisoners. Much attention had been paid to training all ranks to maintain the chain of command and to be ready to step promptly into the shoes of any senior who became a casualty. The results were evident near Windy Corner on 9th April. For instance, Private G. E. Brookes of "D" Company took command of a Lewis-gun team when the section commander was killed and pushed the gun up to within ten yards of the enemy, maintaining a steady fire at point-blank range. While the enemy was thus held another party worked round behind them and captured them. At about the same time, Private H. Wareing was making his way forward with a party of reinforcements in face of very heavy machine-gun fire. After three unsuccessful attempts to lead his men to their destination, he crawled across the open to within bombing distance of the machine-gun post and bombed it. This action threw the enemy into confusion and enabled another party which had made its way skilfully to their rear to capture them. These and similar incidents, directed by Bodington, completely stopped the enemy's advance through the gap between the two brigades and moreover resulted in the capture of several hundred prisoners, including the regimental commander and staff and the band previously mentioned.

In the meanwhile, "B" Company, which had moved on the word "Bustle" from Gorre to an intermediate line, was ordered forward. It had no sooner emerged from the wood in which that line ran and was still nearly half a mile west of Windy Corner when it met a body of Germans who fired at it and forced it to deploy. Wilkinson, the company commander, and his second-in-command had both been killed; but Second-Lieutenant D. Marshall assumed command and promptly attacked the Germans across the open, drove them back and, following them up, was able to thrust them out of the gap through which they had come and which he now filled. Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten sent two of "B" Company's platoons to the help of the 1st/4th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. These worked up Grenadier Road and Hitchin Avenue, two communication trenches leading north-east and east from Windy Corner, and cut off large parties of Germans, who surrendered. They then took up a position in New Cut Extension, a switch line farther north and a little to the east of Le Plantin, and in the old British line in that area. This was a mistake, probably due to some senior officer of another regiment, aware of the danger from the left, diverting them from their proper task. At 11.30 a.m. these platoons were ordered back to Windy Corner, where they arrived at about 12.30 p.m. and helped to strengthen the defensive flank there. This reinforcement was timely, as "A" Company had become so weak through casualties

that it had had to be withdrawn to Pont Fixe and put in reserve for the King's Own in the right sector. In readiness for the latter task, Company Serjeant-Major T. T. Chadwick, who had behaved with great skill and gallantry throughout the morning, went forward and reconnoitred. He later sent back very clear reports which enabled Wild to make such dispositions that a large number of the enemy were killed or captured.

The two remaining platoons of "B" Company were sent up Wolfe Road and Orchard Road, communication trenches in the left and centre of the King's Own sector. In command of one of them was Second-Lieutenant John Schofield, who, at the cost of his life, was to win the 2nd/5th Battalion's third Victoria Cross. He first led a party of nine men against a strong-point which was reported to be strongly held by the enemy and where he was indeed attacked by about a hundred Germans with bombs. So skilfully did he dispose his small body and such good use did he make of his rifles and Lewis gun that he drove the enemy to take cover in dug-outs. Next he held up and himself captured a party of twenty Germans and, with the help of other parties, cleared the position which these Germans had been holding and killed or captured the remainder of its garrison. He then collected the survivors of his men, made his party up to ten and, having sent a message back to Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten explaining the situation and stating that he was proceeding to retake the front line, advanced towards the latter. He soon met large numbers of the enemy in a communication trench in front of him and in a drain on his right and left. His party opened rapid rifle fire, while he climbed out on to the parapet of the trench under point-blank machine-gun fire and forced the enemy to surrender, to the number of several officers and about 120 men. A few minutes later, as he pressed on towards the front line, this very gallant young officer was killed. He had been ably helped by Private C. McGill, who also stood up on the parapet under heavy fire and, by throwing the enemy into confusion through his unexpected fire, contributed much to Schofield's big capture.

Fine work during the advance of these two platoons of "B" Company was also done by Second-Lieutenant W. E. Rider and Lance-Corporal C. Old. The former moved about amongst his men with great coolness and encouraged them under violent fire. Three bullets from snipers tore holes in his clothes, though he was not actually wounded. Farther forward, he led his platoon in an encircling movement and succeeded in getting behind a large number of the enemy, helping to capture several hundred of them. Old was leader of a bombing party and ran into a nest of Germans who fired on them with two machine guns at point-blank range. A little later, he was the first man to reach and reoccupy certain points of the original front line, and throughout the day showed great coolness and determination.

Throughout the afternoon, Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten sent parties up, as he could make them available, to help the forward battalions in clearing the trenches of Germans and re-establishing

their line. Here again Blamey showed fine initiative and powers of command, and helped to make many captures. The Windy Corner area was finally cleared ; and soon after, a successful counter-attack by the brigade on the left resulted in large numbers of the enemy being driven down to that spot, where the 2nd/5th did much execution. Second-Lieutenant C. L. Chorley behaved very gallantly during this clearing process, killing or capturing several German posts. On one occasion, when leading eight men up a communication trench, he met two machine-gunners who had their guns trained down it ; but he forced them to surrender and sent down both them and their guns. Perhaps the most remarkable incident was that in which Private W. Lord, a battalion runner, was involved. While he was returning from the front line after dark by himself, he was held up by fifteen of the enemy with a machine gun. They ordered him to lead them to the front line. He signalled to them to follow him, which they did under the impression that he was doing as he had been ordered. Instead, he led them down the communication trench to battalion headquarters, where he coolly handed them over.

By 2 a.m. on 10th April, the whole brigade sector had been finally cleared of the enemy and the line restored to its original position. The overwhelming German attack had completely failed. The battalion's casualties had been 3 officers and 28 other ranks killed, 3 officers and 84 other ranks wounded, the Medical Officer taken prisoner and 25 other ranks missing. The decorations awarded were :—

Victoria Cross

Second-Lieutenant J. Schofield.

Bar to the Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O.

Bar to the Military Cross

Captain K. T. Blamey, M.C.
Captain J. R. Bodington, M.C.
The Reverend R. E. G. Newman, M.C.

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant C. L. Chorley.
Second-Lieutenant D. Marshall
Second-Lieutenant R. S. Mowle.
Second-Lieutenant W. E. Rider.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major T. T. Chadwick.
Lance-Corporal C. Old.
Private G. E. Brookes.
Private W. Lord.
Private C. McGill.
Private H. Wareing.

Bar to the Military Medal

Serjeant J. Donovan, M.M.
Corporal F. Palmer, M.M.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major J. Dixon.
Corporal J. W. Barnes.
Corporal E. Forrest.
Corporal W. Jenkinson.
Corporal J. Street.
Lance-Corporal C. Duffin.
Lance-Corporal F. Fitzpatrick.
Lance-Corporal J. A. Hudson.
Private D. Brookes.
Private T. Brown.
Private B. Clegg.
Private B. Davies.
Private H. F. Follett
Private J. W. Gregson
Private J. H. Grice.
Private W. Hampson.
Private R. G. Hillman.
Private E. Jackson.
Private H. S. Malone.
Private J. E. Moxon.
Private M. Robinson.
Private R. Taylor.
Private C. M. Terry.
Private G. Terry.
Private S. Waldram.
Private F. W. Weatherhead.

The Attack spreads to the North

"Lys," "Estaires," "Hazebrouck"

11th Battalion

11TH BN. After its ordeal on the Somme battle-front in March, the 11th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel E. C. de R. Martin, D.S.O., M.C.) enjoyed a few days of rest before it was moved by train from Candas to Caestre on 31st March. It took over a quiet sector of the line near Le Touquet on 3rd April, but was relieved two days later and went into reserve at Kortepyp Camp, not far from Neuve Eglise. Shortly after midday on 9th April it was ordered to "stand to" and to be ready to move at very short notice. The German attack, after overrunning the positions occupied by the Portuguese, tried to spread fanwise. In the south, as has been described, it ran its head into the immovable wall of the 55th Division. At the other end, however, the enemy succeeded in getting behind the British troops lying to the left of our Allies and, in spite of stiff fighting, penetrated rapidly towards Fleurbaix and Bac St. Maur. The 74th Infantry Brigade, which included the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, was placed at the disposal of the 34th Division for "puttying up the gaps." At 1.45 p.m. the battalion marched to a rendezvous at Steenwerck. At 3.45 p.m. information was received that the Germans had reached Bac St. Maur, which was about three miles away. The brigade was ordered to verify this report and, if it was true, to drive the enemy to the south. The 11th Lancashire Fusiliers was detailed as the advanced guard with instructions that, on reaching the road running from Estaires through Croix du Bac to Nieppe, it was to send forward strong patrols to clear up the situation and to expel the enemy from Bac St. Maur if found there. Within the unit, "D" Company (Major E. Munday) formed the advanced guard. It discovered that the reports of the German occupation of Bac St. Maur were correct. The battalion accordingly deployed and took up a position parallel with the road just mentioned and with its right resting on the Steenwerck-Croix du Bac-Bac St. Maur road. It was later joined by the rest of the brigade, which attacked at 8.30 p.m. and succeeded in advancing its line a short distance. The night was exceptionally dark and there was no moon. Nevertheless when orders were received to push the enemy still farther south beyond Croix du Bac, the battalion, advancing at 2 a.m. on 10th April on a frontage of three companies over ground which was unknown and intersected by hedges, seized the village of Croix du Bac, bombed several posts and took some prisoners. A number of casualties were suffered, however, and it was necessary to reinforce the battalion at about 4 a.m. with four machine guns. It appears, moreover, that the village was not properly "mopped up" in the inky darkness, with the consequence that at about 6 a.m. German snipers and machine guns made their appearance in it and gave considerable trouble. At 9.30 a.m. the enemy attacked in strength astride the Bac St. Maur–Croix du Bac road and broke through between the right of the 11th

Lancashire Fusiliers and the left of the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, enfilading both battalions. An hour later the Germans were reported to be working round the 11th Battalion's left flank, beyond which two other units had been forced to fall back. A withdrawal therefore became urgently necessary and was begun, an order being received from brigade headquarters that the battalion was to hold the cross-roads south of Messeau Mill (three-quarters of a mile south-east of Steenwerck) and gain touch with the 3rd Worcestershire Regiment at La Menegate. This proved to be impossible and by 3.30 p.m. the Germans were advancing on both sides of Steenwerck, especially on the east and along the houses on the southern outskirts of the village. The battalion became involved in heavy street fighting in the village itself, in the course of which the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Martin, was reported missing. Command of the battalion then devolved on Major G. D. Brown, M.C. The situation was now critical, but Captain R. K. Beswick, of the 11th Battalion and Captain G. H. Stead, M.C., Cheshire Regiment, of the 74th Trench Mortar Battery, collected as many men as they could find of the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and the 74th Brigade Headquarters and, in conjunction with other similar parties, succeeded in establishing a line running from Pont de Pierre (where the road crosses the Stil Becque a mile north-west of Steenwerck) in a curve to Steenwerck station. They had thrown off the immediate pressure of the enemy; and they enjoyed a quiet night with very little machine-gun fire. Second-Lieutenant R. F. Ackerley and his platoon did excellent work this day and beat off three German attacks, he himself holding on till all but one of his men were knocked out. At 7.55 a.m. on 11th April the battalion was ordered to advance with a view to straightening the line and clearing the outskirts of Steenwerck. The movement began at 9.30 a.m. in a mist and was at first successful, the fringe of the village being captured after severe hand-to-hand fighting and heavy casualties on both sides. Company Serjeant-Major R. Abbott set a splendid example and penetrated farther into the village than anybody else, bringing back valuable information as to the location of the enemy. The gains could not, however, be held owing to the intensity of the fire directed against the battalion, which withdrew at about midday and dug in on a line appreciably farther forward than its original position of that morning, with its right at Pont de Pierre. That evening a welcome order was received that the brigade would be relieved by the 92nd Infantry Brigade, of which nothing further was heard! The following day, 12th April, found the battalion in the same positions as on the 11th. Active patrolling was carried out, one German officer and one man being taken prisoner through the initiative of Company Serjeant-Major R. Abbott, who heard of their presence in a house about three hundred yards in front of the line and crossed "No Man's Land" in broad daylight to obtain what proved to be a valuable identification. At 9.50 a.m. the battalion's

Lewis guns brought down a hostile aeroplane, whose pilot was severely wounded. The battalion was not engaged in major operations this day, but on its right the line had had to be drawn back under pressure from the enemy and the unit found itself at the point of a salient which was becoming ever sharper. At 7.30 a.m. on 13th April the enemy attacked the Pont de Pierre bridgehead and forced the battalion to withdraw about fifty yards ; but the lost ground was retaken half an hour later with the help of an artillery barrage and, although German machine guns were troublesome throughout the day, no further attempt was made to dislodge the battalion. The Germans had, however, made considerable progress near Neuve Eglise, farther north, and the salient at Pont de Pierre began to be in peril of being cut off. An organized withdrawal was therefore arranged to take place during the night 13th/14th April ; and by 5 a.m. on 14th the battalion was digging itself in on a new line on the Mont de Lille, a mile south-east of Bailleul, with outposts on the main Bailleul–Armentières road west of le Leuthe. The enemy lost no time in following up this retirement ; and at 11.35 a.m. troops of the Alpine Corps, a fresh formation which had taken part in the 1918 offensive for the first time the day before, advanced to the attack. Though by now sorely reduced in numbers, the battalion beat off the attack with rifle and Lewis-gun fire. It is small wonder that an officer of the Alpine Corps is quoted in Sir James Edmonds's Official History of the War as having written after the war that he considered that the defenders on the British front in April, 1918, were the best troops of the many with whom they had crossed swords in the course of the four and a quarter years of war. Major G. D. Brown, M.C., was wounded during the attack and the command of the battalion devolved on Captain R. K. Beswick, M.C., who continued throughout the operations to display the same skill and determination which he had shown in Steenwerck on 10th April, organizing counter-attacks and setting a most inspiring example to the men by his strong personality. In the evening of 14th the battalion supported a party of the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment which successfully counter-attacked some Germans who had crept up to the top of the Mont de Lille under cover of the hedges. Second-Lieutenant N. E. Ward was in command of a party of reinforcements moving forward from battalion headquarters when this movement began. He immediately charged at the head of his men and cleared the crest of the hill, driving the enemy down the steep slope on the other side and inflicting a number of casualties. The outposts were re-established on the main road at night and this satisfactory position was handed over early on 15th when the brigade was relieved and withdrawn into Corps reserve. The day was spent in digging a sector of new rear defences about a mile north of Bailleul. In the meanwhile, the enemy had renewed his attacks on the front line and at 5 p.m. the battalion was ordered to "stand to" in case it was needed to move forward in support. By 2 a.m. on 16th events had moved so rapidly that further withdrawals of the

forward troops had become necessary and the battalion's new position had become the front line, up to which the Germans soon advanced. In order to establish a satisfactory line of outposts, some cottages in front of the line were attacked by parties under Captain H. A. Hutson and Second-Lieutenant W. Stelfox and, after several attempts, were finally captured at about midday. No attack developed, but several concentrations of Germans were seen and dealt with by the artillery. On 17th the battalion was heavily bombarded during the morning and a number of casualties were suffered. But it was relieved that night and withdrew to a position in close support. So heavy had been the losses of the battalion and the brigade that the survivors of the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and the 74th Trench Mortar Battery were formed into a composite battalion under Major E. P. Nares, M.C., of the Cheshire Regiment. The 11th Battalion's casualties were 4 officers and 17 other ranks killed, 19 officers and 218 other ranks wounded, and 3 officers and 184 other ranks missing. For his valuable services during these critical days, Captain R. K. Beswick, M.C., received a bar to his Military Cross: other awards included :—

Military Cross

Captain H. A. Hutson.
Second-Lieutenant W. Stelfox.
Second-Lieutenant R. F. Ackerley.
Second-Lieutenant N. E. Ward.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major R. Abbott.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major J. McConnell.
Lance-Corporal R. Dugdale.
Private E. W. Brocklehurst.
Private W. C. Oliver.
Serjeant F. Greaves.
Corporal H. Jobber
Private A. Blackburn.
Private R. Nicholas.
Private C. R. Tabrum.

"The Battle of Vieux Berquin"

"LYS," "ESTAIRES," "HAZEBROUCK"

1st Battalion

Some of the difficulties experienced by the 11th Battalion on 11th and 12th April were due to retirements on its right, and it will now be shown how unavoidable these were and what gallantry and skill were displayed by those taking part in them, and not least by the 29th Division and the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers in it. The latter had spent the winter of 1917-1918 in a most uncomfortable situation with its left resting on the ruins of Passchendaele church and its communications overlooked by the Germans. From 21st March onwards it was daily expecting to be sent down to the scene of the drama which began on that date, for it was unthinkable that the 29th Division should not play a role—and a distinguished role—in events of such importance. But it was not until late on 7th April that the battalion came out of the line and received orders to be

1st Bn.

ready to entrain for the Somme on the night of 9th/10th April. It was at this time that the command of the battalion was taken over by Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Modera, M.C., who had been a practising barrister before the war, had enlisted in the 20th (Public Schools) Battalion Royal Fusiliers, and had risen through the positions of serjeant, subaltern and adjutant to be its second-in-command, being transferred on its disbandment to the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers. On 9th April Lieutenant-General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston, commanding the VIII Corps and the former commander of the 29th Division, made a speech to the battalion in which he said that the division was going south for the counter-attack on the Somme. The rumble of heavy artillery fire could be heard to the south, but the General said that so far as he knew the enemy had not attacked. During the afternoon the battalion received orders to be ready to move in buses at 8.30 p.m. for an unknown destination. And at 10.15 p.m. the convoy started, but it was not for the Somme. As has been described in connexion with the 11th Battalion, the enemy had made considerable progress at the northern end of his front of attack and had advanced to Estaires and Bac St. Maur. The line was thinly held, in one sector by the tired remnants of a division which had fought most gallantly and suffered heavily in the retreat of the Fifth Army in March. The 29th Division was being sent to its help, but without its artillery and without one of its three infantry brigades. The 1st Battalion accordingly debussed close to Vieux Berquin at 6.30 a.m. on 10th April, to find the roads severely congested, and in some cases completely blocked, by transport and by refugees seeking to take away as many of their belongings as they could from homes they had thought inviolable. It marched through Neuf Berquin to Robermetz (half-way between Neuf Berquin and Merville), where "A" (Captain P. W. D. Conran) and "D" (Captain J. H. Spencer) Companies were concentrated in a field, while "B" (Second-Lieutenant J. Cassidy, M.C.) and "C" (Second-Lieutenant W. King) Companies were sent out to take up an outpost position facing south-east, half a mile south-east of and parallel to the Neuf Berquin–Merville road. These dispositions were completed by 2.15 p.m. ; but at 4 p.m., in consequence of a report that the enemy had broken through at Sailly-sur-la-Lys, the battalion was ordered to move in an hour's time in a north-easterly direction in diamond formation, to keep 3,000 yards in rear of the right of the 87th Brigade, which was to take up a line from Pont Tournant to Petit Mortier (both north of Sailly-sur-la-Lys), and to be echeloned in support of the 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers. It took some time to recall the outpost companies ; but at 5 p.m. the battalion moved off as directed with its left on the road running from Merville to Neuf Berquin and north-east from the latter. At 6.50 p.m., before it had had time to reach the position already allotted to it, it was ordered not to go beyond a line running north and south between Estaires and Doulieu (two and a half miles north of Estaires) and to establish its headquarters near Pont du Petit Bois, a cross-roads by the

Meteren Becque about a mile north of Estaires. These new positions were taken up by 8.30 p.m. with "A" and "B" Companies in the forward zone, "C" forming a defensive flank on the right and "D" Company in reserve. The night was quiet, but early on the 11th there began what is described in the 1st Battalion's War Diary as "The Battle of Vieux Berquin." At 6.15 a.m., in consequence of shells from light guns and trench mortars falling in "B" Company's area—an indication of an advance by the enemy—patrols were pushed down the roads leading to the south-east to find out the situation. One of these, under Second-Lieutenant E. L. Ford, on going down the road towards Trou Bayard (north-east of Estaires), found a number of men of another division retiring from that hamlet. Ford rallied them and, with them and his own platoon, reoccupied a line immediately north-east of it. This party fought gallantly here all day and none returned. As it was evident that the Germans had penetrated the front line and were firmly across the River Lys in several places, "B" Company was ordered to refuse its right flank so as to face south-east, "C" Company to hold a line astride the Meteren Becque for about five hundred yards north-east from Pont du Petit Bois, and "D" to continue "C"'s line to the right. This change was completed by 10 a.m.; but, although the battalion's left was in touch with a unit of the 87th Brigade, its right was in the air. In the meanwhile the Germans were continuing their attacks on the meagre forces of the tired division already mentioned. And at about 1 p.m. one of its battalions was seen to be retiring down the road running from Estaires along the Meteren Becque, while it was reported that the right of the line which rested on the main Estaires–Neuf Berquin road was falling back. The 1st Lancashire Fusiliers were ordered to re-establish the line and extend their own frontage. Three companies moved forward at 2 p.m. "D" Company on the right was at once met by very heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, suffered many casualties and gained only three hundred yards. "C" in the centre had advanced about the same distance when it was counter-attacked by the enemy. This onslaught was beaten off, but the company had later to withdraw to its original position, where it repulsed two further German assaults. "B" Company gained its objective but, finding itself outflanked on the right, had to fall back to its original position under cover of the fire of its Lewis guns. "D" Company adjusted its line accordingly. This small operation had cost the battalion heavy losses, the three companies losing nine out of their eleven officers and 300 other ranks. While it was in progress, "A" Company was withdrawn to battalion headquarters to act as a reserve. Later Captain P. W. D. Conran and fifty men from it were sent to occupy a wood 2,400 yards due east of Neuf Berquin in order to harass the enemy who were reported to be in possession of the village. This party was never heard of again, but some months afterwards it was learnt that Conran had died of wounds in German hands. Twice during the day very valuable work was

done by Second-Lieutenant A. Francis, M.M.: during a heavy bombardment of high explosive and gas he went out and brought in a Vickers gun and its ammunition from a forward post when all the team had been gassed; and later when another Vickers gun was out of action because its team had been knocked out, he crawled forward and opened fire with it so that his company were able to reach a good position under cover of its fire.

Elsewhere the situation had become so serious during the afternoon that at about 5.30 p.m. the battalion received orders to withdraw to a line of posts about 1,000 yards farther back and about 3,000 yards east-north-east of Neuf Berquin. The operation was carried out successfully, though not without loss, Lieutenant G. Kirby, the signalling officer, being killed while moving with battalion headquarters. Companies reorganized under the only officers now available for duty with them -"A" under Second-Lieutenant G. P. Seed, "B" under Second-Lieutenant J. Cassidy, M.C., "C" under Second-Lieutenant G. McK. Bruce and "D" under Second-Lieutenant R. Heap—with a total strength of 240 N.C.Os. and men. Late that night the battalion was ordered to withdraw at 2 a.m. on 12th April and take up a position in brigade reserve between Doulieu and Bleu (which lies just over a mile east of Vieux Berquin), with its right resting on the Meteren Becque. This movement was extremely difficult owing to the darkness and to the confusion which inevitably prevailed between units and companies, and was not completed till dawn, with the result that there was little time for digging in before further attacks might be expected The retirement was, however, successfully accomplished, "B" Company with "A" in support being in the neighbourhood of the road junction half a mile south-east of Bleu, and "C" with "D" in support round some buildings on the bank of the Becque. At 7 a.m. the Germans bombarded the positions on the right of the battalion. They also sent a shell into the latter's headquarters: it burst, but providentially did no more damage than to shake the occupants, upset their breakfast and cause injuries to one man through the falling of timber. It seemed that an attack was developing against the troops on the right; and the outer flanks of "A" and "B" Companies were refused so as to be ready for any threat from that quarter. By about 10 a.m. Lieutenant-Colonel Modera could see from his headquarters that troops were falling back on the left in large numbers as far away as Outtersteene, near Merris. This movement spread until the battalion's left was in the air, and Lieutenant-Colonel Modera had to order it to be refused. By 12 noon a similar withdrawal had taken place on the right. At about 1.45 p.m. the Germans succeeded in working round to the rear of the battalion's left flank and orders were received to conform to the general line elsewhere by falling back to a line running from Bleu to the level-crossing over the railway close to Outtersteene. This movement proved to be very costly to the already weak unit as practically no cover was available. Nor was it the last change of

position which the battalion was called upon to make. At about 5.30 p.m. the brigade was ordered to step back into support on a line running from Vieux Berquin to Labis Farm, which lies at a bend in the Merris–Vieux Berquin road. The orders for this withdrawal never reached Captain G. S. Lockwood, M.C., who with eighteen men and two Lewis guns was on the extreme right of the line. He found at dusk that the Germans were on both his flanks and also in a cemetery not a hundred yards away in front. But as he had had no orders to move, he determined to hold on ; and he did so, keeping the enemy back and inflicting heavy losses on him until the supply of ammunition was exhausted. He then came to the conclusion that no other course was open to him but to withdraw : and he proceeded most skilfully to extricate his whole party, including several wounded men and both his guns, and lead them back to the battalion's new position, which he finally reached just before dawn on 13th April. Throughout these operations, Lockwood performed invaluable work in rallying and encouraging the men. In the meanwhile the rest of the battalion had withdrawn successfully, thanks largely to Regimental Serjeant-Major W. Lund, who helped to secure the orderly carrying out of the movement and was one of the last to leave. He was another of those who, during those critical days, set a fine example of coolness by the way in which he moved about, regardless of danger under heavy fire, reorganizing and heartening the men. By 8 p.m. the bulk of the remnants of the battalion, now some 150 men, was in its new position, with headquarters in Vieux Berquin, and set to work to dig strong points. The night was quiet.

But the next day, 13th April, was far otherwise. The Germans attacked repeatedly and succeeded in enfilading the new line from the left. All day fighting went on ; and during the afternoon a general tendency to withdraw spread from divisions on the left and involved elements of the battalion who were under the impression that orders to that effect had been given. As soon as Lieutenant-Colonel Modera became aware of what was happening, he collected all the men concerned and led them back to their original position of the night before. And it was this position, held throughout the day, which the battalion evacuated at 11.30 p.m. that night, on the orders of the Divisional Commander, when both its flanks were in the air. It withdrew behind a position newly established by the Australians and moved to St. Sylvestre Cappel, where it was joined during the 14th by many small parties of men who had become detached in the confusion and had fought with other battalions, and by the battle reserve of 10 per cent. This latter party had been left under Major T. Slingsby, M.C., in a camp at St. Jan ter Biezen, where it stayed for several days before being rushed forward by light railway and route march, in company with several parties which were combined into a composite battalion, to a position of readiness near Caestre behind another division. It was never actually called upon and withdrew on 14th April. Even with these welcome additions, the 29th Division had been so weakened that its two

brigades which had fought near the Berquins were temporarily amalgamated into one "divisional brigade," of which the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers formed half a battalion with the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry under Lieutenant-Colonel Modera, "A" and "B" Companies being combined under Captain H. Q. Rangecroft and "C" and "D" under Captain T. Newton, M.C. The 15th and 16th April were spent in reorganizing. But at 4 p.m. on 16th orders were received to "stand to" and at 6 p.m. the battalion moved in fighting order to a position 1,000 yards south-west of Caestre, where it came under the orders of General Robillot, commanding the French II Cavalry Corps. The situation for which it might have been needed became less acute, however, and at 11 p.m. it returned to its billets, though not for long. For the next day, 17th, was also a day of alarms. The battalion "stood to" from 5.15 a.m. to 6 a.m.; and at 10 a.m. it moved again to its position of the previous evening near Caestre. The companies lay under hedges all day and worked for three hours after dusk on a new line of trenches, returning to their billets at midnight but resuming work next day, 18th. On 19th April the battalion moved to Hondeghem and spent the next few days working on the defences of that place. On one occasion as the battalion was marching out a German scouting aeroplane came over; the pilot threw some "egg" bombs at the battalion, but they exploded harmlessly in a neighbouring turnip field. Otherwise the battalion's ordeal was over. The units of the 29th Division received congratulatory messages from Army, Corps and Divisional Commanders, all of whom spoke of the important effect which their gallant resistance had had on the operations as a whole. The 1st Battalion's losses during these operations up to 15th April had been 1 officer and 25 other ranks killed, 4 officers and 167 other ranks wounded, and 4 officers and 247 other ranks missing, most of whom proved to be dead or evacuated with wounds through other units. Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Modera, M.C., whose cool control of each successive situation on this first occasion of commanding the battalion in action had made a valuable impression on all ranks, received the Distinguished Service Order; and Captain G. S. Lockwood, M.C., a bar to his decoration and Second-Lieutenant A. Francis, M.M., the Military Cross; while Regimental Serjeant-Major W. Lund was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and Private T. Stanley the Military Medal.

The Pioneer Battalion is drawn into the Fight

"LYS," "FIRST KEMMEL"

19th Battalion

As the Germans drove deeper gaps into the British positions, the line became very strained and it was necessary to use every available man. The battle reserves were formed into extemporized units, as has been described in the case of the 1st Battalion; and

all units, regardless of their normal functions, were laid under contribution to stem the flood. The Regiment's pioneer unit, the 19th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. Ambrose Smith), was no 19TH BN exception, though it must not be forgotten that pioneers are as much combatant troops as any other infantrymen. After a winter of routine work in the Ypres Salient, the 19th Battalion was moved by train on 10th April to Busse Boom, about 3,000 yards south-east of Poperinghe, and on the morning of 11th to La Clytte, a mile and a half north-west of Kemmel. Early in the afternoon of that day it moved forward to man the defences of Mount Kemmel as part of a mixed force called the Kemmel Defence Force under Lieutenant-Colonel H. D. Bousfield, C.M.G., D.S.O., 7th West Yorkshire Regiment. Outpost positions were occupied by "A" Company (Lieutenant J. M. Smith) on the right, "B" (Captain G. A. Wright) in the centre and "C" (Captain H. Musker, M.C.) on the left. On 12th "A" and "C" Companies were shelled and on the following day the latter was withdrawn into reserve. On the next four days shelling continued and numerous casualties occurred. The shelling on the 17th was more severe and it covered a strong German attack, in the holding up of which "A" Company took a full share. The next day, 18th, also saw considerable shelling, but it brought the relief of the forward companies by French troops; and the 19th Battalion concentrated on the west side of Mount Kemmel where it dug itself in. It spent the next few days at its normal work of improving defences and communications, but in a few pages it will be found to be involved in the thick of the fighting.

Throughout this period, Regimental Serjeant-Major W. Garner worked unremittingly to organize ration and ammunition parties and to keep supplies moving up to the troops. It was entirely due to his initiative that they did not lack for ammunition even at the most critical moments. Another who did excellent work was Serjeant J. F. Jackson, who as signalling serjeant showed great courage in establishing telephone communication with the companies and in repairing the lines which were frequently broken by the shelling. The awards made for this action included the following:—

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Regimental Serjeant-Major W. Garner. Serjeant J. F. Jackson.

Military Medal

Company Quartermaster-Serjeant J. Moulson.
Corporal F. Mayell.
Lance-Corporal J. Hitchin.
Private V. Fisher.
Private F. Milligan.
Serjeant E. T. Osmond.
Corporal A. Fennell.
Lance-Corporal F. Chadwick.
Private W. H. Booth.
Private C. Fogell.
Private A. G. Pooley.
Private T. J. Prosser.

Riez du Vinage—German Attack, a Patrol Affair and a Counter-attack

"BÉTHUNE," "LYS"

2nd Battalion

2ND BN. After its ordeal on Fampoux Ridge on 28th March, the 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. Watkins, M.C.) left the Arras district on 12th April and moved by bus to Busnes, near Lillers. Marching about a mile south-east next day, it spent several days in training at l'Eclème before relieving the 1st Hampshire Regiment at Riez du Vinage, a hamlet on the north side of the Aire–La Bassée Canal a mile north-east of Mont Bernenchon, with its headquarters in a house close to the drawbridge where the road from the latter to Robecq crosses the canal. The Germans had reached this position, the limit of their advance westward, after an advance of about eight miles. Many farms which had for over three years been considered immune from the ravages of war and had been regularly worked by their occupants were now in or very near the front line. They had been hurriedly deserted and their livestock was running wild. It would not have been right to help the enemy by allowing any food to reach him if it could be prevented, and the British troops consequently stopped any pigs or hens from crossing the line and diverted them to their own transport lines. Lieutenant-Colonel W. Bowes, D.S.O., the devoted quartermaster of the 2nd Battalion, saw to it that what the troops provided the troops received, and a pig sent down the line went back thither in the form of hot pork after a very short interval for suitable treatment. Wine and other pleasant things were rescued from houses where they would otherwise have been destroyed by shell fire and there appeared to be no reason to put them in the canal. The medical officer, Captain S. H. Adams, of the United States Medical Reserve Corps, said later that he had heard that after a prolonged diet of this sort the men began to ask for bully beef!

But most of these good things could only be enjoyed when things had settled down. When the 2nd Battalion arrived in this sector, there were more urgent things to think about. At 1 a.m. on 18th April the Germans began shelling the back area. Two hours later this bombardment became more intense and at 3.45 a.m. the 1st King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, on the right of the battalion, sent up the "S O S" signal. A barrage was promptly put down by the artillery and caught the enemy in his assembly trenches, inflicting heavy casualties. The brunt of the attack fell on the King's Own, but the right Lewis-gun post of "B" Company (Captain S. Clarke, M.C.) of the 2nd Battalion was involved, though it managed to drive the enemy back with a loss to him of twenty dead. "C" Company (Captain T. H. Robinson) in the centre saw some movement on their front and sent out a patrol which brought back a prisoner. Thereafter the day was quiet until 8.15 p.m., when there was further fighting on the right with the object of restoring the

situation, which was successfully done. Six prisoners fell into the battalion's hands during this episode.

At 2 a.m. on 21st April, Second-Lieutenant E. J. V. Hemelryk took five men out as a reconnoitring patrol along a track leading from the battalion's line and near the River Clarence. After going some way he saw an enemy sentry. The party rushed the latter and found a machine gun and a post consisting of nine Germans, of whom they killed five and took the remainder prisoners, bringing them back with the gun.

After some local reliefs and in spite of shelling which was at times heavy, the battalion enjoyed two further days of comparative quiet before contributing its share to an attack on 23rd April designed to straighten out the line north of Riez du Vinage. On the previous evening some reshuffling of companies and their dispositions was carried out and it was necessary to withdraw "C" Company from the hamlet while the opening barrage was being fired. The troops detailed from the 2nd Battalion comprised "D" Company under Lieutenant N. D. Evans and a platoon of "A" Company commanded by Second-Lieutenant H. Taylor. "C" Company was to give support. The artillery opened their barrage at 4.30 a.m. and soon afterwards the attacking party advanced from their assembly position north-west of Riez du Vinage. Good progress was made and at 2.30 a.m. Lieutenant-Colonel Watkins received reports that the objective, the line of the road connecting Mont Bernenchon with Calonne-sur-la-Lys near la Pierre-au-Beure, had been reached. But "D" Company lost both its officers in crossing the Courant de Hennebecq, a stream flowing into the River Clarence; the men lost direction, and, in their enthusiasm, overshot the objective, went to the farther end of La Pierre-au-Beure and, while keeping in close touch with the main attacking force of the 2nd/5th Gloucestershire Regiment on the left as ordered, left a gap of some five hundred yards between themselves and "B" Company, who were holding the original line on the right. Second-Lieutenant T. R. Warn was sent from "B" to take over "D" and to adjust the line, but he was wounded on his way across. Second-Lieutenant W. F. Lilley, M.M., of "A" Company was then sent forward and succeeded in sending a situation map back to battalion headquarters. "C" Company were ordered to send a patrol out to get touch with "D" Company but Second-Lieutenant E. J. V. Hemelryk was killed in the first attempt, Second-Lieutenant W. S. Gilbert wounded in a second and Second-Lieutenant H. Chilton killed in a third and last effort. Fortunately, the situation appeared to be as obscure to the Germans as it was to the British. For they indiscriminately shelled the position where the latter should have been and destroyed one of their own machine-gun posts which was holding out in the gap between the two parts of the line. It was eventually decided to withdraw the remnants of "D" Company after dark to a position about three hundred yards short of the objective. In preparation for this movement, Second-Lieutenant W. H. Riley went forward four times through heavy

machine-gun fire and accurate sniping and brought back very valuable information as to the situation. When night came, Company Serjeant-Major T. Dalton took forward a platoon of "A" Company and, with Riley's help, established a new line across the gap. The operation was not easy as the Germans kept up a steady fire ; but Dalton put his men out into posts of three or four men each in shell holes at intervals of thirty yards and took command of this part of the line until the battalion was relieved. As soon as Dalton's party was in position, Lilley was ordered to withdraw "D" Company, which he successfully did though he himself stumbled on to a German machine-gun post and was seen to fall wounded. The battalion should have been relieved that night, but this was impossible owing to the adjustments which have just been described. The next day was quiet except for an unsuccessful German counter-attack on the 2nd 5th Gloucestershire Regiment and for heavy sniping which increased the 2nd Battalion's casualties. That night Riley and an officer of the Royal Engineers laid out a tape along the position occupied by Dalton's party ; and the 2nd Seaforth Highlanders dug themselves in on it and then relieved the battalion, which marched back, very tired, to Gonnehem. Throughout the tour in the line, the signallers had done excellent work in keeping telephone lines repaired in spite of heavy shelling, and they, the runners (gallant as always) and the stretcher-bearers were not forgotten when rewards were given. The battalion lost 3 officers and 48 other ranks killed, 3 officers and 120 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 58 other ranks missing. It had captured forty prisoners and two light machine guns. The honours awarded to the battalion were as follows :—

Military Cross

Captain S. H. Adams, U.S.M.R.C. Second-Lieutenant W. H. Riley

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major T. Dalton.

Military Medal

Serjeant S. Brown.
Lance-Corporal F. Sherliker.
Private Jones.
Lance-Corporal H. R. Powell.
Private J. Davidson.
Private D. Lanigan.
Private J. Potts.

The Loss of Mount Kemmel

"LYS," "SECOND KEMMEL"

11th and 19th Battalions

In response to urgent appeals, the French had at length taken over about six miles of the front from Bailleul to near Wytschaete.
19TH BN. The Kemmel Defence Force, which included the 19th Lancashire Fusiliers (Lieutenant-Colonel J. Ambrose Smith), had, however, been left on the slopes of Mount Kemmel to help in the strengthening of defences. On 22nd, 23rd and 24th April the battalion was

employed in digging a communication trench from the rear towards the south-eastern corner of Mount Kemmel. At 2.30 a.m. on 25th the German artillery opened a heavy bombardment with high explosive and lachrymatory and mustard gas, as had been foretold by a prisoner taken by the French the previous evening. The infantry assault followed at 6 a.m. when the Germans overran the French positions and, in a little over an hour, had seized Kemmel village and Mount Kemmel with its invaluable observation. "A" Company (now commanded by Captain H. W. Huxley) had also largely disappeared. Lieutenant-Colonel Ambrose-Smith, in an attempt to save the situation, sent his Lewis-gun officer (Lieutenant F. R. Mutch) towards the top of the hill and disposed the rest of the battalion from a farm on the spur of the Mount known as Little Kemmel, out to the right. In this position the battalion was attacked continuously until the Germans succeeded in working round both its flanks. The Germans surrounded the battalion headquarters, the assistant adjutant (Lieutenant G. O. Thomas), Regimental Serjeant-Major W. Garner and Orderly Room Serjeant G. Griffiths being killed, and only 1 officer and 17 men escaped unharmed. The Commanding Officer, who was wounded about midday, and 14 other officers and 333 N.C.Os. and men were missing. 9 men were known to have been killed and 48 to have been wounded In spite of a gallant and prolonged resistance against overwhelming odds, the battalion had met with disaster owing to a German advance of a rapidity which could not have been foreseen and which should not have been possible.

11TH BN.

The 11th Battalion, to the command of which Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. T. P. Ward-McQuaid had just been appointed, took part in an attempt made on the following day to recapture the lost ground. After its exhausting experiences ten days before, that battalion had enjoyed a few days of rest, mingled with reorganization and training, at Dirty Bucket Camp near Brandhoek. At 1.15 p.m. on 25th April, in consequence of the events which have just been described, the battalion marched round Poperinghe to the vicinity of the cross-roads north-west of Reninghelst, whence an officer's patrol was sent out to ascertain the situation on the north side of the La Clytte–Kemmel road. This reported that the enemy were holding the valley of the Kemmelbeek stream but that some British troops were in position against them. Late that day the battalion was ordered to be in support to the 3rd Worcestershire Regiment and the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, the other two battalions of the 74th Infantry Brigade, which were to attack at 3 a.m. on 26th April in conjunction with French troops on the right and other British troops on the left with a view to retaking Mount Kemmel and Kemmel village. The troops moved off at 11.50 p.m. A few minutes later heavy rain came down and by 3 a.m. it had become a drenching downpour which soaked the men to the skin and made the going very bad. The Kemmelbeek proved to be a serious obstacle as it was flooded and its banks were steep. On the other

hand, the barrage was so thin that the Germans mistook it for normal harassing fire and did not answer it. In the event, complete surprise was at first achieved when the attack was delivered. But fog, which supervened and which would have been a help if the troops had known the ground and practised the operation, caused loss of direction and a gap between the left of the leading troops of the 74th Brigade and the outer flank of the brigade on the left. "A" Company (Captain C. M. Newman) of the 11th Battalion was therefore sent forward as a reinforcement and rushed a nest of machine guns, taking twelve prisoners and two guns. Parties of the other two battalions entered Kemmel village, but became mixed in the house-to house fighting which followed. Newman with his company and men of the other units pushed right on to the road junction by Kemmel church. Here he was wounded; whereupon Second-Lieutenant M. D. Walker took command of the mixed detachment, fought his way right through the village into the open country beyond and occupied an old, dilapidated British strong-point, which he held for over an hour against large numbers of the enemy, inflicting heavy casualties on them. In the meanwhile, in another part of the battle, Private A. Corlett saw that the battalion on his right was being held up by machine guns. He took out a Lewis gun and although wounded as he went, he took up a position from which he brought flanking fire to bear on the guns. He forced these to withdraw and so enabled the attack to go on.

By 8 a.m. it was clear that Walker's detachment, although it had been joined by a few men of another brigade, was dangerously threatened by parties of the enemy working down from the north-east and that it was so completely out of touch on both flanks that, if the fog lifted, it would be surrounded or have its retreat cut off by machine-gun fire from Mount Kemmel. Walker therefore withdrew his mixed force along the south side of the Messines–Kemmel–La Clytte road and rejoined the rest of the brigade which had in the meantime also fallen back and had begun to consolidate the line of the Kemmelbeek, the 11th Battalion being again in support at the La Clytte crossroads. The battalion's casualties were 5 men killed, 3 officers and 30 other ranks wounded, and 9 men missing. The honours awarded for these operations were :

Military Cross
Second-Lieutenant M. D. Walker.

Distinguished Conduct Medal
Private A. Corlett.

Bar to Military Medal
Corporal J. Joll.

Military Medal

Private F. Foulger.
Private A. Pennifold.
Private H. Lord.
Private H. Stebbings.

General Robillot, commanding the French II Cavalry Corps, sent a very cordial message of congratulation to the troops engaged in the fighting of these few days.

On 29th April, in consequence of a report that the Germans had captured two other valuable vantage points, Mont Vidaigne and Mont Rouge near Locre, the 74th Brigade was hurriedly sent to form a defensive flank about half a mile north-west of La Clytte. But the alarm was false and the brigade's destination was found to be already occupied by large numbers of French troops. The brigade therefore returned to its original position.

A Period of Comparative Quiet

In spite of the striking captures of ground and other outward signs of success which have been described in this and the previous chapter, the Germans had not achieved the goals they had set for themselves. This failure reacted on the troops; and a battalion runner of the 152nd Infantry Regiment of the 41st German Division, captured near Gommecourt by the 1st/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Castle, M.C.) when he got lost on 25th April, said that the morale of the Germans was falling as their "push" had not been such a success as was expected. 1ST/5TH BN.

The enemy was nevertheless still quite alert, as was shown when the 1st/5th carried out a small raid under Lieutenant C. H. Carruthers the following night. The trench attacked proved to be very strongly held and the party had to withdraw, Carruthers being wounded. 1ST/5TH BN.

Nothing was more infuriating or likely to breed ill-feeling between units than for a precious piece of ground which had been tenaciously held by one formation, often at the cost of considerable casualties, to be lost by the relieving brigade. But this happened at Givenchy, where the 55th Division's successors lost some very important positions in the craters which had been held on 9th and 10th April. A small operation for their recapture was organized on 26th April. At 2.30 p.m. a company from the 2nd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O.) under Captain L. J. Sutton and one from the 1st/4th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment attacked under a heavy barrage. The King's Own were successful in gaining their objectives, but the 2nd/5th were less fortunate, partly owing to the barrage not covering two important points on the frontage attacked. Nevertheless, distinguished gallantry was shown by a number of men, particularly by Private N. Turner who, when the advance of his party up a trench was checked, climbed on to the parapet under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire and bombed the Germans back, enabling his platoon to get forward. He was wounded early in the operation, but refused to go back and continued to bring messages to his platoon commander, Second-Lieutenant C. L. Chorley, and supplies of bombs to the forward troops, in spite of heavy shelling and machine-gun fire. Chorley fell mortally wounded, but Turner refused to leave him although the enemy, who had brought up reserves and had begun a counter-attack, were advancing. Indeed Turner, almost single-handed, held the Germans off for some 2ND/5TH BN.

time so as to enable Chorley to be taken back. For nearly six hours altogether from start to finish Turner was engaged in bombing encounters, often at very close quarters. The German counter-attack proved too strong and the company had to fight its way back to its starting point. It lost 1 officer and 13 other ranks killed, 4 officers and 40 other ranks wounded, and 26 other ranks missing. On the other hand, it brought back 37 prisoners and had the satisfaction of learning that the enemy, in his official communiqué, had paid it the compliment of describing the operation as "a large attack." Private N. Turner received the Distinguished Conduct Medal, while Military Medals were awarded to Corporal A. Crook and Privates G. Aldred, G. Evans, D. Hyde and J. A. W. Long.

1ST/8TH BN. Farther south, near Gommecourt, the 1st/8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. S. MacLeod, 8th Durham Light Infantry) turned to good account information of the enemy's dispositions brought back by well-handled patrols, and on the nights of 26th, 27th and 28th April advanced its line on a frontage of seven hundred yards and to a depth of five hundred yards, establishing and linking a series of posts on the new position.

1ST BN. The 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Modera, M.C.) carried out a raid on Ferme Beaulieu near La Motte early on 6th May, the attacking party consisting of Second-Lieutenants G. McK. Bruce and W. Rodger and 58 other ranks of "C" Company. Soon after starting Corporal D. McEvoy, M.M., and his section came under heavy machine-gun fire from a hedge behind the objective. McEvoy brought up a Lewis gun in order to bring cross-fire to bear; and under cover of its fire he crept up to within thirty yards of the German gun, which he bombed so effectively that the whole raiding party was able to reach its objective. The farm buildings could then be thoroughly examined: although no live Germans were found, several corpses were seen and some valuable information obtained. McEvoy was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his share in this affair.

15TH BN. In the south the 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel D. Lindsay, M.C.) exchanged knocks with the enemy in May. The Germans began on 10th May by sending out two parties, each of three N.C.Os. and about a dozen men, at about 9.30 a.m. to work down some old saps which led into the battalion's line near Blaireville. These parties advanced till they came to blocks which had been established, when they leapt outside the trench, came thus past the blocks and jumped into the British trench and began bombing inwards towards two of the 15th Battalion's posts. One party was at once ejected and quickly went back to its own lines, leaving two wounded prisoners. The other party was more successful and when it withdrew five men of the battalion were missing.

16TH BN. The same night a strong fighting patrol of the 16th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel A. Stone) was sent out under Captain E. B. Lord and Second-Lieutenant H. Jagger to get a much-needed identification. Lord led his party some five hundred yards into the

enemy's lines, going along a railway embankment near Blaireville till they came to a sugar factory, where they skilfully cut off and brought back two prisoners, returning to their own trenches without a shot being fired or the Germans being aware that anything had happened. Lord was awarded the Military Cross for this clever exploit.

15TH BN. The 15th Battalion took its revenge for 16th May on 21st May. At 3 a.m. a fighting patrol of thirty-five N.C.Os. and men under Second-Lieutenant G. L. Barclay and Second-Lieutenant A. E. Brice moved out under cover of an artillery barrage—the wire having been previously cut in part by Stokes mortars—and, after Barclay had skilfully led them through some unexpectedly remaining wire, rushed a German post in a sunken road. Three prisoners and one light machine gun were captured. Barclay then brought his patrol back with a loss of six casualties, none of them fatal. He received the Military Cross for his coolness, dash and leadership.

Perhaps to keep up his slightly dampened spirits but more probably to find out what British troops were in front of him so as to gain early warning of any regrouping which might indicate a counter-offensive, the enemy continued to be active in raiding. At 10.35 p.m. on 23rd May about twelve Germans raided a post of "W" Company of the 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. F. Crook, D.S.O.) near the middle of Aveluy Wood under cover of machine-gun fire and of a mortar barrage which included smoke. The garrison was therefore blinded; two of them were wounded and the remaining two captured, though one slipped away and returned to the company. The post's Lewis gun also disappeared. The occupants of the nearest post rushed to the rescue, but the whole affair was over in two minutes and by the time they could arrive the enemy had left. The division to which the 17th Battalion belonged had only recently come to this part of the line and the new identification secured by this raid must have alarmed the Germans, for they made a series of similar attacks on various units during the next few days. On 24th May posts of "W" Company of the 17th Battalion were approached four times by night and once by day, but each time the raiders were driven off by rifle and Lewis-gun fire.

17TH BN.

A Glorious Disaster

"AISNE, 1918"

11th Battalion

11TH BN. On 2nd May, 1918, the 11th Battalion (Major W. L. Crawford, D.S.O.) was relieved in the line near Kemmel and marched by stages to Esquelbecq, where it spent two days in training. It then, on 8th May, entrained at Waayenburg and, after a tedious journey through strange scenery, found itself two days later at Fère-en-Tardenois, fifteen miles south-south-east of Soissons, in the middle of the zone of the French Army. Four tired British divisions—and no troops

had more honourably or gallantly justified the epithet than the 25th Division to which belonged the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers—had been sent to what purported to be a quiet and restful sector in exchange for French divisions sent to the north to help the British in their efforts to prevent the Germans from reaching the Channel ports. The battalion spent over ten days in rest and training in a camp at Coulonges, six miles east of Fère-en-Tardenois, where Lieutenant-Colonel G. P. Pollitt, D.S.O., Royal Engineers, assumed command. Training was continued near Montigny-sur-Vesle, twelve miles north-west of Reims, whither the unit moved on 23rd May. Nor was this training an unnecessary intrusion upon a period of rest, for the battalion had received a large number of only partly-trained drafts from England during the month.

There seemed every prospect that these recruits (for they were little more) could be thoroughly trained while the battalion was in reserve, as it was at Montigny, and could then have a more or less kindly initiation into the conditions of the front line when its turn came to take over the somnolent trenches on the Chemin des Dames, the long ridge which lies to the north of the River Aisne and whose western end the 2nd Battalion had gallantly attempted to take on 13th September, 1914. But on 26th May two Germans, captured by the French, stated that a formidable attack was to be delivered next day. The French staff for the most part refused to believe this warning; but the British, convinced also by other indications, acted on it as far as they were able in the short time available. The 11th Battalion was ordered to "stand to" at 7.30 p.m. on 26th and to be in readiness to move at ten minutes' notice. At 10 p.m. it was put on the road to billets at Muscourt, a mile south of the Aisne, where it arrived at 3 a.m. on 27th. Two hours earlier one of the heaviest bombardments of the war was opened along a wide front which included three British divisions. Many gas shells fell on the areas behind the line. At 5 a.m. the "S O S" was seen to go up and soon afterwards hordes of Germans poured over the forward positions. Much uncertainty prevailed as communications failed at an early stage. As, however, it soon became clear that the enemy had broken through the original line, reserves were moved to secondary positions with a view to stopping his further advance. The 11th Battalion was accordingly ordered at 9 a.m. to occupy a frontage of four hundred yards on the high ground south of the River Aisne. At about 10.50 a.m. the Germans reached that obstacle opposite the battalion. Shortly after, the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, the left unit of the 74th Infantry Brigade, became engaged and by 1.30 p.m. the Germans had succeeded in crossing the Aisne and the Aisne Canal immediately to the south of it by a bridge at Maizy and were advancing rapidly along a valley towards Muscourt. The 11th Battalion was involved but succeeded in holding up the attackers on the road leading south from Concevreux. The German parties which had moved up the valley succeeded, however, in entering Muscourt; and as the battalion's flank was thus

turned it was forced to withdraw to a ridge near Meurival. Its stay here could not be long on account of the heavy shelling to which the Germans subjected the position. It was here that Lance-Corporal Joel Halliwell won his Victoria Cross. He galloped forward on a stray horse captured from the enemy and, under very heavy machine-gun and shell fire, brought back unaided and single-handed to a place of safety an officer and nine men who had been severely wounded and were unable to move. In each case he saw personally to their evacuation by stretcher-bearers towards medical aid. Three times he made unsuccessful attempts to make what would have been his eleventh rescue, but the enemy was by now advancing so rapidly that he had to retire to avoid capture. All accounts agree that Halliwell's courage and fearlessness were exceptional throughout this trying day. Lance-Corporal H. Thompson also showed great coolness and courage throughout this day in collecting and organizing men. He too made several journeys into No Man's Land to bring in wounded. His example did much to stiffen the resistance to the German advance.

Although the battalion was shelled off the ridge, its withdrawal was a short one and it found another position along a road five hundred yards to the south of it. Between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. the Germans launched three local attacks against the 11th, but were repulsed with heavy losses each time. In the meanwhile, however, the enemy had succeeded in turning flanks at other points on the battlefield, and at 10 p.m. the brigade was ordered to withdraw to Romain, two miles farther south, to conform with similar movements on each side of it. The battalion moved to Breuil-sur-Vesle, where its quartermaster, Lieutenant J. Gower, with the help of the transport serjeant, Serjeant W. Barnett, managed to supply it with hot tea. During the day the losses had been 6 men killed and 6 officers and 79 other ranks wounded.

The night was quiet, but at 5.30 a.m. on 28th May, a very hot day, the battalion was ordered to fill a gap in the line along a ridge near Huit Voisins, one mile north of Breuil. At 7 a.m. the Germans broke through on the right. Its commander ordered the 74th Infantry Brigade to withdraw, keeping touch on both flanks, and gave the 11th Battalion the task of covering the withdrawal of the 3rd Worcestershire Regiment and the 9th North Lancashire Regiment. Hard, desperate fighting ensued, with the Commanding Officer leading repeated counter-attacks, and remnants of those two units succeeded in reaching the south bank of the River Vesle which lay behind Montigny. The rest of the story cannot be told better than in the words of the War Diaries. "The last report of the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers," recorded the brigade headquarters, "was that they were almost surrounded and heavily engaged. . . . There is little doubt that the C.O. carried out his orders to the letter in maintaining his position to the last." "Nothing further has been heard of the battalion," in the words of its own War Diary, "and it is presumed they have been taken prisoners or killed."

Lieutenant-Colonel G. P. Pollitt, D.S.O. (who had given a magnificent example of courage and leadership throughout), 13 other officers and 319 other ranks were missing. The party which had been left in reserve as a matter of routine and which consisted of Major R. K. Beswick, M.C., and 16 N.C.Os. and men now represented the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, though they were joined by a few others, as will shortly be seen. Many other units of the four British divisions had been badly, though few so severely, mauled; and composite battalions and brigades had to be formed, a "brigade" being usually all the infantry of one division and a "battalion" the survivors of a complete brigade. It was manifestly impossible to reconstitute units as they had been and, after many moves, what was left of the 11th Battalion moved on 19th July to Rouxmesnil Camp, Dieppe, where the battalion was disbanded on 12th August, 1918, having lost 4 commanding officers, 84 other officers and 1,250 other ranks between 21st March and 28th May.

As the Commanding Officer and most of the battalion were prisoners, many acts of individual gallantry went unrewarded through the lack of anybody to initiate a recommendation and only the following honours were awarded :—

Victoria Cross

Lance-Corporal J. Halliwell.

Second Bar to Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel G. P. Pollitt, D.S.O.

Military Medal

Serjeant W. Barnett.
Corporal S. Greenwood.
Private H. Mansell.
Corporal T. K. Garfat.
Lance-Corporal H. Thompson.
Private R. Waine.

Major-General H. C. Jackson, D.S.O., of the 50th Division, under whom the 74th Infantry Brigade fought on 28th May, wrote to the commander of the 25th Division :—

> "I do not wish to pick out one unit more than another for special mention. But if it is desired to bring to the notice of the Army Commander one individual unit I would mention the fine fighting qualities shown by the Commanding Officer and all ranks of the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers on the morning of 28th May."

On the day after this disaster, an officer of the 11th Battalion, Second-Lieutenant E. G. Wylie, M.C., who was intelligence officer of the 74th Infantry Brigade, showed that the spirit of the lost unit was still alive. During the retreat across the Vesle he collected parties of leaderless men and held up the advancing enemy who had broken through and crossed the river. These parties and a few machine guns held up the Germans at this point for four hours and made it possible for the remnants of the brigade to take up a good position on the high ground south of the river. Wylie's valuable

work and splendid example throughout 29th May earned for him a bar to his Military Cross.

Major Beswick's remnants were joined by a small party under Lieutenant M. D. Walker, whose adventures during the battle are a good example of its confusion and fluidity. The train in which he was returning from a course with about a dozen N.C.Os. and men of the 11th Battalion, only half of them armed, was machine-gunned from the ground during the afternoon of 28th May when it should have been near corps headquarters. A little farther on it was warned by British cyclists to halt; and, after a British driver had replaced the civilian who absconded, it was reversed but not before three German machine-gunners had been taken prisoner by some men from the train. The latter was eventually abandoned and its passengers marched off in the heat, with little food and less information. An officer of the Royal Engineers put Walker's and other parties into positions with orders to fight a delaying action. The Lancashire Fusiliers dug themselves in before dark, with a wood in front of them, and spent a restless night. In the dawn of the next morning the Germans advanced and were greeted by such fire as Walker could bring to bear on them. His party was then machine-gunned by a low-flying aeroplane and, as the troops on the flanks had disappeared, was forced to withdraw to successive positions in rear, being harassed by rifle and machine-gun fire as they went. Soon after, they joined up with other similar parties of another division and continued an orderly but foodless and exhausting withdrawal, taking every opportunity of opening fire on any Germans they saw and indeed taking a few prisoners. Finally they passed through some Senegalese troops of the French Army and, after getting some food from rather reluctant villagers, made their way by night to the Marne. This they crossed with a sigh of relief as they met the 11th Battalion's interpreter.

A Gallant Attempt at Aveluy Wood

17th and 18th Battalions

17TH AND 18TH BNS.

After their ordeal in the "March Retreat," ending at Buire, the two remaining South-East Lancashire battalions went to Bonnay and Hédauville for a few days' rest, and thence into the line at Aveluy Wood on 11th April. The rest of the month was spent in routine reliefs in this area. On 4th May they went into corps reserve at Toutencourt and enjoyed a fortnight's training, going back to Aveluy Wood just before the incidents which were described a few pages earlier. While there, Captain S. A. Bull, the medical officer of the 17th, had an alarming experience when an aerial bomb took away half the house in which he was billeted and left him in bed on the first floor, unhurt but fully exposed to view.

The German line ran through Aveluy Wood from north-east to south-west, emerging opposite Martinsart and going thence almost

due south on to the high ground which lies between the villages of Aveluy and Bouzincourt. The Army Commander decided that the high ground in the middle of Aveluy Wood, which was very thick and choked with undergrowth, should be captured and held. The task was allotted to 104th Infantry Brigade, temporarily under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel L. M. Stevens, D.S.O., 17th Lancashire Fusiliers; and the latter battalion with the 18th were relieved on 25th May to practise the operation near Hédauville. The plan was for three companies of the 18th on the right and one of the 17th on the left to attack from Heathcotes Bank, near Martinsart, and to gain the edge of the wood, and for another company of the 17th to push forward into the wood itself. Engineers, pioneers and machine guns were attached to help in the consolidation of the final objective.

The 17th Battalion went back into the line on 29th May, while the 18th went into reserve in the "Purple Line" north of Bouzincourt. At 11 15 p.m. on 31st May the troops in the front line were withdrawn a short distance to allow the heavy and field artillery to carry out an intense bombardment of the enemy positions in the wood. This lasted until 12.37 a.m. on 1st June; when the front line was reoccupied, a German soldier of a hitherto unidentified regiment was found hidden in the British trench on the return of the troops. The assembly of the attacking troops took place without incident, and at 3 25 a m the barrage came down on the edge of the wood, with a smoke screen on the southern flank of the attack. The first wave moved up as close as possible to the barrage; unfortunately, a few shrapnel shells fell short at first and hit an officer and several men of the liaison party between the two battalions. Apart from this, the advance on the western edge of the wood was successful, both units gaining their first objective. Second-Lieutenant P. McGiveney particularly distinguished himself at this stage, for when the company to which he belonged was ejected from this objective he gathered a handful of men, returned to the attack and retook the objective. He was wounded in the face but went on single-handed, bombed three posts and took their occupants prisoner. Later, while he was organizing another bombing party with a view to a further advance, he was so badly wounded in the spine that he had to be taken away and he died three days later. In the meanwhile, the ravine between Martinsart and Aveluy Wood had been rushed by a platoon of the 18th, followed by two platoons of the 19th Northumberland Fusiliers, who consolidated the right flank. But parties of the 17th Battalion which had been detailed to make a flanking movement in the wood from the north were heavily shelled by trench mortars, though these were soon silenced by the artillery. By about 5 a.m. the 18th Battalion had reached its final objective and were establishing posts at the south-west corner of the wood, Second-Lieutenant R. H. Turnbull, 18th Battalion, rendering valuable service in clearing enemy posts in spite of heavy casualties to his platoon. Captain C. S. Atkinson, also of the 18th, was respon-

sible for killing a great number of the enemy ; and, with only two men to help him, he captured and brought back twelve Germans. Second-Lieutenant R. S. Bauld, of the same battalion, although with the reserve company, seeing that the situation was obscure, collected a party of men and pushed through to the final objective, where he established several posts before he returned to organize carrying parties. Prisoners were coming in in considerable numbers at this stage. Indeed, the message announcing the capture of the final objective was entrusted to a very small German who nevertheless delivered it correctly and smartly.

From then onwards things did not go smoothly. The high ground to the south of the scene of the attack had not been included in the operation, and from it came heavy machine-gun fire which caused many casualties and made communication by runner between the forward troops and headquarters almost impossible. Attempts to carry on visual signalling failed as practically all the signallers in the front line had been hit. Second-Lieutenant S. Greeves, M.C., the intelligence officer of the 18th Battalion, therefore went forward on his own initiative to find out what was happening. He arrived just before the final objective was taken and, with four men, pushed on and helped to secure it, capturing two prisoners and a light machine gun on the way. He then returned and explained the situation to another officer, who pushed on to the objective. After that he made his way back to battalion headquarters and was able to give very valuable information on the trend of events. Another cause of trouble was the fact that the enemy discovered that Heathcotes Bank was a scene of great activity and shelled it with guns which were able to shoot at it in enfilade, making the evacuation of the many casualties still more difficult.

Soon it was the turn of the enemy. Reinforced by a fresh regiment, the Germans counter-attacked in force at about noon, using bombing parties, without rifles, which approached almost unobserved through the dense undergrowth. The small body of troops in the wood was forced to withdraw, though not before they had thoroughly searched all dug-outs and shelters, capturing several machine guns. Private A. H. Bird, of the 18th, attacked and captured a machine gun alone and later destroyed a trench mortar with a bomb. Both battalions retired fighting. Lance-Corporal J. Muldowney, M.M., of the 17th, held up a strong German bombing party for nearly an hour, throwing over a hundred bombs. In the end he rushed the party single-handed and captured its four survivors. Lieutenant F. R. Halliwell, of the 18th, took command of his company when the captain was wounded and after maintaining his position on the objective succeeded in extricating his men though pressed by greatly superior numbers. A party of the 17th clung for some time to a strong point just within the wood until they were forced out of it by Germans bombing down a trench. The 18th used up all their own bombs and those they had taken from the enemy ; one of their parties, under Captain F. J. Butler, M.C., was nearly

cut off, but when all his bombs had gone he skilfully got it away, being the last to leave the wood and only just escaping. The final stage of the withdrawal was perhaps the most difficult, for three hundred yards of open ground, swept by machine-gun fire from the south, had to be crossed in full view of the enemy. By 1 p.m. the original line had been reoccupied. Both battalions had to endure heavy shelling with much gas till dark, when they were relieved and moved back to Hédauville. The 17th's casualties had been 17 men killed, 5 officers and 64 men wounded, and 13 men missing; in the 18th the losses had been more severe—2 officers and 18 other ranks killed, 7 officers and 144 rank and file wounded and 1 officer and 48 men missing. The Army, Corps and Divisional Commanders all praised the troops for their excellent behaviour and expressed the view that they had given more than they got. The honours awarded included :—

Distinguished Service Order

Second-Lieutenant P. McGiveney, 17th Battalion.

Bar to Military Cross

Captain F. J. Butler, M.C., 18th Battalion.
Second-Lieutenant S. Greeves, M.C., 18th Battalion.

Military Cross

Captain C. S. Atkinson, 17th Battalion.
Second-Lieutenant R. S. Bauld, 18th Battalion.
Lieutenant F. R. Halliwell, 18th Battalion.
Second-Lieutenant R. H. Turnbull, 18th Battalion.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Lance-Corporal J. Muldowney, M.M., 17th Battalion.
Private A. H. Bird, 18th Battalion.

Military Medal

Serjeant P. Halliwell, 18th Battalion.
Serjeant G. Royle, 18th Battalion.
Serjeant H. Ward, 18th Battalion.
Private G. Burnell, 18th Battalion.
Private R. F. Nightingale, 18th Battalion.
Serjeant J. Nicklin, 18th Battalion.
Serjeant W. Shepherd, 18th Battalion.
Private G. Blewitt, 18th Battalion.
Private J. Eccleston, 18th Battalion.
Private G. F. Taylor, 18th Battalion.

In addition, Private T. W. Sholicar, of the 17th Battalion, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal on the occasion of the King's Birthday for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty over a period of two years, including valuable services on patrol, for which he was always the first to volunteer.

Raids and Counter-Raids

2nd, 5th, 10th, 15th and 16th Battalions

The end of May, 1918, found the great German effort exhausted, without having achieved its object, and the Allies nursing their many wounds and preparing for the riposte. But, as always, complete calm was not allowed to prevail and both sides delivered frequent raids in June and July to see what mischief their immediate opponents were about.

At 2.30 a.m. on 4th June, 1918, the Germans opened a furious bombardment with guns and trench mortars against the front of the 52nd Infantry Brigade south of Beaumont-Hamel. The brunt of it was borne by the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cotton, 7th Yorkshire Regiment). At 2.40 a.m. the barrage lifted to the support line and, closely following it, parties of Germans who had used old trenches crossing the new No Man's Land broke into the battalion's trench on a frontage of several hundred yards, overcoming the garrison on the left flank. On the right they were met with vigorous Lewis-gun fire; and Lance-Corporal H. J. Colley with two men bombed along the trench and succeeded in ejecting the intruders at 2.50 a.m. A good many casualties were inflicted on the enemy, but the battalion lost an officer and 12 men killed, 21 men wounded and 2 officers and 13 other ranks missing. Lance-Corporal H. J. Colley, soon to win the highest of all decorations, was awarded the Military Medal. 10TH BN.

During the afternoon of 7th June a party of Germans carried out a silent raid on "D" Company of the 2nd/5th Battalion (Major P. S. Cookson, Royal Sussex Regiment, in temporary command) near Givenchy, capturing a N.C.O. and six men. The company did not take this lying down. At 12.20 a.m. that night it sent out an officer and 20 men under cover of an artillery barrage to rush some enemy posts in shell holes. The darkness was intense and the Germans very alert, so that the party was unable to force an entry and had to return to its own lines. 2ND/5TH BN.

On 9th June, Private F. Thirsk, of the 15th Battalion, thoroughly earned the Distinguished Conduct Medal which was later awarded to him for a very plucky act. When on patrol, he saw a German machine gun being brought into action. He dashed ahead, engaged the crew and captured the gun, thereby undoubtedly saving the lives of his comrades. 15TH BN.

"C" Company of the 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. K. Utterson, D.S.O., Dorsetshire Regiment) sent out two officers and fifty other ranks, under cover of a barrage laid down by guns, trench mortars and machine guns, at midnight on the night 11th/12th June to raid the German lines near Boisleux-au-Mont. Some opposition was met at the junction of a sap with the main enemy trench, but this was overcome and the party reached its objective, capturing three men and killing a number of others, against a loss of 2 men killed and 2 officers and 10 other ranks wounded. 15TH BN.

A more elaborate operation was carried out by the 2nd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O.) shortly before midnight on 19th June. A force of 100 men, consisting of fifteen sections divided into five parties under Second-Lieutenants W. R. Smith, W. Forster, A. Farrow, N. Mahoney and J. Wake, lined up behind a barrage of artillery, machine guns and mortars and advanced on an area which proved to contain five, or more probably seven, German machine guns. Progress was considerably hindered by a large amount of loose wire lying about in the high grass as well as by 2ND/5TH BN.

machine-gun fire coming from the flanks and some bombs from a trench mortar. Nevertheless, four of the five parties forced an entrance into the enemy's positions, much fighting taking place with the garrisons. Forster's party in particular had a hard struggle ; for a machine gun was brought into action in the post which was its objective, and he had to rush it with revolver and rifle fire, the team of six Germans being killed. The gun was captured and brought back. At another post, Corporal F. Crossley led his section against a machine gun, killing three of the garrison himself, seizing and carrying back the gun. A number of casualties were inflicted on the enemy and two men were taken prisoner. All the machine guns were put out of action. The raiders' casualties were 1 man killed, 2 officers and 37 other ranks wounded, and 17 men missing believed killed. The Divisional Commander, Major-General H. S. Jeudwine, in a note of congratulation to Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten, wrote : "Your fellows showed a fine spirit last night and must have fought like demons." The honours awarded were :—

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant W. Forster.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Corporal F. Crossley.

Military Medal

Serjeant M. Fahy.
Corporal F. Sante.
Serjeant J. Grimshaw.
Private T. W. E. Jones.

16TH BN. During the same night "A" Company of the 16th Battalion (Major E. W. P. Uniacke, D.S.O., King Edward's Horse, in temporary command) raided the German lines in the Cojeul valley opposite Boyelles. Captain F. F. Waugh was in command and his company was organized into four parties under Lieutenant N. Piper and Second-Lieutenants D. G. Burns, A. R. Ellis and P. Forman. Near a sugar factory Burns met with a party of Germans who, after throwing bombs, retired when fired on. Ellis saw the same party, which again threw bombs and hurried away. The raiders thoroughly searched the area, but saw no further signs of the enemy, returning at the time planned with the loss of two men killed and seven wounded.

More Raids and a Visit to America

16TH BN. Under cover of a mixed barrage of various calibres and types of weapons, "B," "C" and "D" Companies of the 16th Battalion (Major E. W. P. Uniacke, D.S.O., in temporary command) raided the village of Boyelles on the night of 2nd/3rd July. For the last time, Captain F. F. Waugh was in command of the operation. No. 1 party under Second-Lieutenant N. Gardner at first advanced without opposition but came under machine-gun fire and, after killing a German near the cemetery, withdrew without being able to enter the enemy's lines. No. 2 party under Second-Lieutenant T. M.

Bosworthwick was also driven back by heavy machine-gun fire, but succeeded in capturing a machine gun, four prisoners (three of whom had to be killed as they gave trouble) and some valuable maps and papers. No. 3 party under Waugh himself went towards the village itself in order to "mop it up." After going about a hundred yards, they too came under heavy fire from machine guns. Waugh and two other officers were wounded and the party so disorganized that Waugh was not seen again. The remaining party under Second-Lieutenant S. Vasey, M.C., searched the ground west of the road leading from Boyelles to Arras, but found only one German, whom they killed. The casualties in this raid were Captain F. F. Waugh and 18 other ranks missing and 2 officers and 55 men wounded. The Military Medal was awarded to Serjeants G. Faulkner and W. H. Hughes and to Privates F. W. Morton and J. H. Rogerson for their work in this raid.

2ND BN.

Towards the end of June it was decided that the 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. A. Kirkby, D.S.O.) should carry out a raid on some German shell holes opposite them near Pacaut Wood, about a mile and a half north of Hinges in Flanders. The first plan submitted was rejected as being too simple and modest; the orders finally issued consisted of sixteen paragraphs and four appendices and occupy five pages of the Lancashire Fusiliers Annual for 1918. The objects of the raid were to obtain an identification, to damage and destroy the enemy's position and to raise the morale of the troops. The party chosen to carry out the operation consisted of twenty-six N.C.Os. and men of "B" Company (Captain G. G. Bowen, M.C.) under the command of Lieutenant H. H. B. Jones, with Serjeant G. W. Wiggin as his platoon serjeant. "Granny" Bowen himself took the party to rest billets at L'Eclème for a few days' training in crawling through standing corn, cutting and passing barbed wire obstacles, and bayonet fighting. A model of the ground was made and every man carefully rehearsed by Bowen and Jones in the part he had to play. The platoon went back to the line on the evening of 5th July. Zero was fixed for 9.30 a.m. the next day, 6th July. Twenty minutes before, the party crawled forward through the crops to an assembly position, where they formed up in line of sections in file. At zero a quick bombardment of numerous batteries, trench mortars and machine guns opened on and around the objective. For one minute the attackers lay flat as instantaneous fuses were being used by the gunners; then for two minutes they crawled forward towards the German positions; and finally the barrage lifted and the troops dashed forward, led by Jones. Serjeant Wiggin, however, dashed ahead and was the first to reach the enemy. Seven Germans were met with; Jones and Wiggin between them killed four and captured three. Finally the party withdrew safely, with one man slightly wounded. Lieutenant H. H. B. Jones received the Military Cross, Serjeant G. W. Wiggin the Distinguished Conduct Medal and Private A. Poole the Military Medal for this operation.

On moving to Flanders, the 17th and 18th Battalions took their turn of duty in the Locre sector. There at 4.15 a.m. on 7th July
17TH BN. about thirty Germans tried to raid a post of the 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. F. Crook, D.S.O.), but after a sharp hand-to-hand struggle they were driven off, leaving identifications behind them. At 11.45 p.m. on 14th July Second-Lieutenant T. C. A. Hill, Second-Lieutenant J. Sillitoe, M.M., and fifty other ranks of
18TH BN. "Z" Company of the 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jewels, D.S.O., M.C.) carried out a raid on the German positions north of Locre Farm. The party formed up on tapes behind a covering party commanded by Second-Lieutenant D. Kidd and advanced under a Stokes-mortar and artillery barrage. On the right, where Hill was in command, progress was held up owing to the mortars firing short, one Lewis gun being blown up shortly after zero. After a delay, however, Hill succeeded in getting through the enemy wire alone, as a gap was blown by a Bangalore torpedo. He was followed by his section towards the German line, which was about thirty yards farther on and was found to be manned by a machine gun and some riflemen. These at once opened fire and threw bombs. Hill was wounded in the arm and blown over by the burst of a bomb; but he took his men on and succeeded in bombing the German trench and silencing the gun. It was then time to withdraw. On the left, Sillitoe forced an entry with two sections but without the help of a Bangalore torpedo which had been broken, and reached a German dug-out underneath a road. It was empty, but the trench near it was bombed. After a quarter of an hour the whole party withdrew to its own lines, its casualties being one officer and nine men wounded and one man missing. Later the same night, a patrol under Captain W. E. Rigby, M.C., went out to search for killed and wounded. He went through the gap in the enemy wire and examined the latter, finding that very little damage had been done to it by the Stokes mortars. Indeed, it was the short-firings of the latter which prevented the raid having more important results.

The scene of the gallant attempt of the 17th and 18th Battalions on 1st June, 1918, saw an exciting patrol fight on 16th July. Second-
10TH BN. Lieutenant R. Graham and his platoon of the 10th Battalion (Major T. B. Forwood, Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry, temporarily in command) left the line south of Martinsart at 10.45 p.m. to obtain an identification. When some twenty yards from the German trenches and while forming up to rush a post, the party was seen. A shot was fired and a large number of bombs thrown which, however, fell in rear of the platoon. While the remainder engaged the enemy with Mills bombs, one section made a determined effort to work round the left flank of the post. This movement was, however, detected by the Germans, of whom there seemed to be about forty at the spot, and heavy rifle and machine-gun fire was opened. As the supply of bombs was rapidly becoming exhausted, Graham realized that it was impossible to rush the post and accordingly gave the order to retire.

It was thought nevertheless that casualties had been inflicted on the enemy. Two members of the platoon were wounded and a third missing, though efforts were made later the same night to find him. Serjeant J. Davidson and Private W. H. Notridge were awarded the Military Medal for their gallantry during this affair.

1st/7th Bn.

A daylight raiding party of eighteen N.C.Os. and men of the 1st/7th Battalion (Major A. Hodge, D.S.O., M.C., 1st/7th Manchester Regiment, temporarily in command) under Lieutenant J. R. Garbutt entered the German lines south-east of Colincamps on 17th July and captured a prisoner. The officer received the Military Cross and Serjeant G. Marsh, Corporal F. Lewis and Privates R. Marshall and E. Rylands the Military Medal.

1st/7th Bn.

On the morning of 22nd July, "C" Company of the same battalion tried to capture a trench known as "Watling Street." The attack was not successful, but Private G. Heardley, M.M., gave further proofs of his courage. When the leader of his section was severely wounded, he carried him under point-blank machine-gun fire to a place of safety and then returned, took command of the section and fought the enemy under heavy fire and bombing. Company Serjeant-Major J. Lindon earned a Distinguished Conduct Medal partly for good work on this occasion in reorganizing parties under heavy shell fire. The company lost 2 officers killed and 1 officer and 34 other ranks wounded.

1st/7th Bn.

Private Heardley distinguished himself again on 24th July when, during a daylight raid, although wounded before leaving his trench, he led a section forward with admirable courage and endurance, attacking a party of forty of the enemy in their trenches and killing about a dozen of them. The raiders' casualties were seven men wounded. For his gallantry on this occasion and on the 22nd, Private G. Heardley, M.M., was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

1st/5th Bn.

The 1st/5th attempted on 22nd July to advance their line near La Signy Farm, 2,500 yards east of Colincamps. They were unsuccessful, as was a further attempt early the following day. But at 5.30 p.m. on 23rd a party of "A" Company under Company Serjeant-Major W. Rushton captured an enemy post. This gain was consolidated during the night of 23rd/24th though not without interference by snipers. Rushton crawled forward, located three of them and killed them. But the work was again interrupted by rifle grenades and trench mortar fire; whereupon he crept out to a flank and, by showing himself and ostentatiously digging and throwing up earth, induced the Germans to believe that the consolidation was in reality taking place where he was. His ruse was entirely successful in drawing the enemy fire off the post and so enabling the real work to go on undisturbed. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his clever work.

2nd Bn.

Another daring and successful exploit was carried out on 26th July by Second-Lieutenant C. Dunlevy of the 2nd Battalion, who, knowing that prisoners were urgently required for identification,

took out four men in broad daylight, stalked an enemy post and brought back two Germans. He was awarded the Military Cross.

Somewhat out of place under the heading of "Raids," but perhaps worth recording none the less, is the entry in the War
2ND/8TH BN. Diary of the 2nd/8th Battalion (which, as previously noted, was engaged in training Americans) under the date 19th July, 1918, that Company Serjeant-Major W. Hedges had left the battalion that day for England on his way to the United States of America as a trench-mortar instructor.

An action which was also not a raid but should be mentioned
2ND/5TH BN. was that of Second-Lieutenant C. V. Broadbent, of the 2nd/5th Battalion (Captain K. T. Blamey, M.C., in temporary command) on the night of 27th/28th July. He was in command of a wiring party near Givenchy which worked under heavy machine-gun fire. On returning to the British trench, he found that one man was missing. Three times he went back under heavy fire to search for him. Finally he came upon him, severely wounded. He carried him back to our trenches where the man died a few minutes later. This inspiring example of bravery and care for his men was rewarded with the Military Cross.

The same battalion (Major P. S. Cookson in temporary command) launched a daylight raid near Givenchy on the afternoon of 30th July under Second-Lieutenant B. G. Butlin, who volunteered for the duty. Careful previous reconnaissance had located an enemy post, which he and a small party rushed, shooting the sentry and bringing back as prisoner another man who was found asleep in a dug-out and was later described as being "extremely stupid." Butlin was awarded the Military Cross.

CHAPTER XV

1918 (Continued). AUGUST TO THE ARMISTICE.

"AMIENS," "SECOND SOMME, 1918," "ALBERT, 1918," "SECOND BAPAUME, 1918," "SECOND ARRAS, 1918," "DROCOURT-QUÉANT," "HINDENBURG LINE," "ÉPÉHY," "CANAL DU NORD," "YPRES, 1918," "ST. QUENTIN CANAL," "CAMBRAI, 1918," "COURTRAI," "SELLE," "SAMBRE"

(Maps 1, 3 & 9)

1st, 2nd, 1st/5th, 2nd 5th, 6th, 1st/7th, 1st/8th, 10th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 23rd Battalions

Curtain Raisers

The Regiment always celebrates Minden Day in some robust way and this custom was observed in 1918. The 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. F. Crook, D.S.O.) marked the occasion by a silent raid on the German lines near Locre. Without any artillery or trench-mortar fire to cover them, Second-Lieutenants J. Worthington and W. D. Stott advanced with two platoons of "W" Company. Stott's party reached its objective, entered the enemy's trench and attacked a post. A prisoner was taken, the rest of the garrison beating a hasty retreat; but neighbouring parties quickly counter-attacked and Stott was compelled to order a withdrawal, during which the prisoner escaped. The other platoon was even less fortunate: it was seen just as it was about to attack its objective and subjected to such heavy machine-gun fire that it had to retire without achieving its task. 17th Bn.

The 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. A. Kirkby, D.S.O.) was enjoying a rest at L'Eclème, two and a half miles east of Lillers, on 1st August and was able to carry out the traditional Trooping of the Colour, the salute being taken by Brigadier-General T. S. H. Wade, D.S.O., a senior member of the Regiment who was then commanding the nearby 11th Infantry Brigade. Two days later the battalion went back to the line at Pacaut Wood (which had been its sector throughout the summer), relieving the 1st Rifle Brigade, who reported that there were indications of an impending German withdrawal opposite them. Companies were warned accordingly and instructed to carry out active patrolling. Strong patrols sent out on the night of 4th/5th August found the German front line unoccupied; but the enemy showed that he had not entirely disappeared by heavily bombarding "B" Company (Captain T. H. Robinson) and the neighbouring battalion on the morning of 5th August and attempting to raid some of the latter's posts. At dusk the same day patrols of "C" Company (Captain A. D. Macdonald, 2nd Bn.

M.C.) were able to occupy the enemy's advanced trench. Throughout the next twenty-four hours patrols continued to creep forward and the line was advanced by nearly five hundred yards at the maximum depth. Two prisoners of the Royal Grenadier Guards were captured by "C" Company at 1 a.m. on 7th. They were French-speaking Alsatians and stated that the enemy, although still then holding the northern edge of Pacaut Wood, intended to withdraw before morning. Brigade headquarters were at once informed and orders issued for the enemy to be pursued by "peaceful penetration," beginning at 8 a.m., when "C" Company moved forward, closely followed by "B" and "D" (Captain S. Clarke, M.C.). The first objective was reached at 9.30 a.m. with few casualties. In the meanwhile, in spite of considerable shelling, "A" Company (Second-Lieutenant C. Dunlevy, M.C.), which was in battalion reserve, had stepped up into the original front line. The division next on the right had taken no part in the advance and the right flanks of "C" and "B" Companies were therefore so exposed that it became necessary to send up a platoon of "A" Company under Second-Lieutenant J. E. S. Malpass to fill the gap. This was done and the rest of the day passed quietly, although there was considerable shelling in the middle of the night. Orders were received during the morning of 8th August—fateful day elsewhere—to push forward posts if possible to the Turbeaute stream. On the right the neighbouring division had still not moved and opposition was met almost at once from Le Vert Bois Farm. On the left an advance was found to be possible for two hundred yards, when it was held up by the garrison of a farm, soon to be called Bracewell Farm. Hitherto the brigadier had insisted that the troops were to advance only where there was no resistance ; but in this case he suggested that the farm should be taken. The task was allotted to a young officer, Second-Lieutenant C. C. Bracewell, who, sending one section to the right and leaving one in position to occupy the garrison's attention in front, led a third section round towards the rear of the building. The Germans soon saw what was being prepared and decamped, enabling Bracewell to seize the farm and the rest of the company to resume the advance. He was himself wounded and had to go back to battalion headquarters. By now Macdonald had lost all his officers and many men, and his company was very exhausted after three days and nights of constant pressure on the enemy. It was therefore relieved by "A" Company, though not before the latter's advance party had unwittingly overstepped the sketchy front line and stumbled into an enemy post, losing Second-Lieutenant C. V. Longland and Company Serjeant-Major S. Brown, M.M. By the morning of 9th August the division on the right had come up, so that Le Vert Bois Farm was the only obstacle to be overcome in order to reach the Turbeaute stream. Dunlevy was ordered to push a patrol into the farm ; if this proved to be impossible, a barrage lasting ten minutes would be put down on the place every hour until entry was effected. After one or two doses of this medicine, the neighbouring

division reported that some men of the battalion were in the farm, and it transpired that Malpass, who (it will be remembered) was commanding the liaison platoon between the formations, had occupied the building. By 12 noon the final objective had been reached and contact established on both flanks. The decorations awarded for this advance were :—

Bar to Military Cross
Captain A. D. Macdonald, M.C.

Military Cross
Second-Lieutenant C. C. Bracewell.

Military Medal
Corporal A. Hart. Private J. S. Logan.
Private W. Whitwam.

Similar probing of the German outpost line had been successful elsewhere. The 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cotton) made progress in Aveluy Wood on 2nd and 3rd August, in spite of mines and booby traps. In one empty bivouac recently vacated by the enemy, this note in English was found :— 10TH BN.

"DEAR OLD TOMMY,

"We congratulate you on your great success, by taking the Aveluy Wald, and making many thousands of Hun prisoners. We wish you will have a very good time here. Perhaps we take you a little bit of a better place somewhere else, and therefore goodbye and au revoir.

"Yours truly,

"GERMAN MARINES."

With the object of obtaining identifications, "X" Company of the 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jewels, D.S.O., M.C.) carried out a raid on the German lines near Locre at 11 p.m. on 4th August, when a party of fifty men under Second-Lieutenants D. D. Rutherford and L. E. Allen, covered by a party of ten men of "W" Company under Second-Lieutenant A. L. Croudace, moved forward in two waves with the support of a barrage supplied by artillery and Stokes mortars. The wire had been successfully cut and the raiding party made an entry into the enemy lines. But the German garrison had withdrawn on the warning given by the barrage and no prisoners could be secured before the time limit set for the raid had come. Lance-Corporal E. W. Plant was awarded the Military Medal for good work during this episode. 18TH BN.

The 23rd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. Hesketh, D.S.O., T.D., Loyal North Lancashire Regiment) now makes its first active appearance. After many weeks of training and of digging rear lines of defences, it took over a sector of the support line near Strazeele on 31st July. Three days later it relieved two and a half battalions of the 31st Division in the support line two miles south-east of Hazebrouck and took over a sector of the front line at Swartenbrouck, two miles west of Vieux Berquin and half a mile north 23RD BN.

of the eastern arm of the Forest of Nieppe. It was not long before the battalion showed that it was "a chip of the old block." For on 6th August a daylight patrol of a serjeant and five men under Lieutenant W. Anderson, M.C., surprised and captured a machine gun and five prisoners, who furnished valuable identifications. Next day a strong party under Captain J. Brown and Lieutenant P. Farrell, M.C., captured several prisoners and some ground in the centre of the battalion's sector, though unfortunately Farrell was wounded and taken prisoner. The battalion received the congratulations of the divisional and brigade commanders for its good start; and the following awards were made :—

Bar to Military Cross
Lieutenant W. Anderson, M.C.

Military Cross
Captain J. Brown.

Military Medal
Serjeant P. Corrigan. Serjeant W. Matthews.
Private J. Dow. Private W. R. Richards.
Private J. Naughton.

The Start of the Return Journey

"AMIENS"

15th and 16th Battalions

The 8th August, 1918, has been called "the black day of the German Army"; for it saw the launching of the first of a series of attacks, some big, some small, on the British front which continued almost without pause until the Germans were compelled to ask for the armistice which came into force at 11 a.m. on 11th November, 1918. The 15th and 16th Battalions were soon involved and found themselves in the country through which they had followed the German retirement—voluntary in that case—to the Hindenburg Line in March, 1917. They moved down from the Ypres district on 7th August, 1918, detraining at Hangest-sur-Somme. On 8th August they were taken in lorries to Domart and Boves respectively and were in reserve to the Canadians during their famous attack south-east of Amiens. The next day the battalions marched through the captured territory to Beaucourt-en-Santerre.

15TH AND 16TH BNS.

At 4 a.m. on 10th August they advanced to Bouchoir, which was to be the starting point of an attack with Damery Wood as its objective. The 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. K. Utterson, D.S.O.) was in the leading wave with the 16th Battalion (Major E. W. P. Uniacke, D.S.O., King Edward's Horse, in temporary command) eight hundred yards behind on a frontage of 2,300 yards. The attack began at 8 a.m.; at 8.25 a.m. the 15th Battalion and the Canadians with them captured Le Quesnoy-en-Santerre and a wood close to it known as "Wood 99." Unfortunately, a German machine gun in the latter was overlooked and Major

Uniacke was wounded by it before its capture by his battalion. In the meanwhile the 15th had pushed on but had come under very heavy machine-gun fire near the Amiens–Roye road and had suffered heavy casualties. They were reinforced by the 16th, and the two units captured "Wood 101" with two machine guns at about 9.20 a.m. At that moment the Germans put down a very heavy artillery barrage which caused many casualties to both battalions. The advance was nevertheless continued. Major L. C. Mandleberg, M.C., and Second-Lieutenant J. Hurst, M.C., both of the 15th, distinguished themselves by their dash, the former replacing some of his company's casualties by picking up stragglers as he went forward. In the 16th, Captain H. C. Gill led his company splendidly, collecting stragglers from other units as he advanced. Second-Lieutenants F. Allcott and P. Forman and Regimental Serjeant-Major E. Anderson all found themselves in command of companies owing to casualties among their seniors and all led their men to their objectives with few casualties. When Second-Lieutenant W. B. Tobey's company was held up by machine-gun fire, he led two platoons forward to a position from which he could bring superior fire to bear on the Germans and so enabled it to move forward. When it was again held up by snipers he crawled towards them, killed three and drove off the rest, once more making progress possible. Movement was, however, slow owing to the large amount of old French and German trenches of 1915 and 1916 and the very heavy wire which protected them. By 10.30 a.m. the two battalions, now greatly reduced in numbers, had entered the old German line west of Damery, but were under heavy fire from both flanks. Nevertheless they reached La Cambuse on the main road south-west of Damery, Major R. B. Knott, M.C., of the 16th contributing much to this progress by working forward with a Lewis-gun team through an old communication trench and opening fire on the edge of a wood which commanded the open space between it and the Amiens–Roye road. Soon after, he, with a mixed party of the 15th and 16th, and Lieutenant W. J. Brockman with a party of the 15th captured a battery of German field guns which was firing over open sights. The Germans began to filter back into Damery Wood. Knott led a Lewis-gun team to engage them inside the wood, but was wounded before he had come to grips with them. Gill then assumed command of the 16th. At 11.50 a.m. the two battalions were ordered to halt and consolidate the ground they had won. But before the order could reach them, they had rushed a copse known as Bois en Equerre, captured a "pill-box" on its western edge and pushed through to the eastern edge. The Germans counter-attacked and forced the troops back to the other side of the wood but could not deprive them of the "pill-box" or the captured guns. Allcott and Tobey again did useful work during the consolidation in spite of heavy fire, Tobey being responsible for repelling an attempted bombing attack. Unfortunately, Lieutenant-Colonel Utterson, of the 15th, was killed during the fighting in the wood. Captain G. H.

Smith, D.C.M., who as acting adjutant had shown great gallantry in making frequent personal reconnaissances in order to keep his commanding officer informed of the situation, assumed command of the unit and did much by his coolness and fine leadership to preserve steadiness in a trying situation. Mandleberg took over the duties of second-in-command of the 15th and organized parties to carry forward rations and ammunition with such a fine disregard of danger that his example produced a marked effect on the spirits of all ranks.

Further attempts at progress were made during the afternoon but without success. The Bois en Equerre was taken and lost once more ; and orders were issued for the line to be consolidated where it was and for patrols to be pushed out to protect the captured guns. Hurst contributed much to the consolidation by collecting stragglers and putting them in position in the front line. Late that night the 15th and 16th were temporarily amalgamated for tactical purposes on account of their heavy casualties. On 11th August the combined unit advanced into the Bois en Equerre at dawn, in rear of other troops, and established a line of posts on the eastern fringe. Throughout the operation the medical officer of the 16th Battalion, Lieutenant G. F. Rigden, had done fine work. He established a first-aid post well forward and carried on his duties in spite of heavy machine-gun fire, even going forward to dress the wounds of men lying in exposed positions. Several seriously wounded men owed their lives to his prompt attention. He showed fine courage and unselfish devotion to duty till he was himself wounded. The brigade was relieved the same evening. The casualties in the 16th Battalion, the only one to record its losses, were 3 officers and 34 men killed, 6 officers and 192 men wounded and 6 men missing. The honours awarded included :—

15TH BATTALION

Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant W. J. Brockman.

Bar to Military Cross

Major L. C. Mandleberg, M.C. Second-Lieutenant J. Hurst, M.C.

Military Cross

Captain G. H. Smith, D.C.M.

Military Medal

Serjeant T. A. Johnson. Private J. T. Malone.
Private A. Ruggall. Private J. W. Rowe.
Private J. Wood.

16TH BATTALION

Military Cross

Captain H. C. Gill. Lieutenant G. F. Rigden, R.A.M.C.
Second-Lieutenant F. Allcott. Second-Lieutenant P. Forman.
Second-Lieutenant W. B. Tobey. Regimental Serjeant-Major E. Anderson.

Military Medal

Private T. Heald. Private G. V. Jones.
Private L. Jones. Private F. Ryding.
Private W. Walker. Private H. Ward.

PROBING

1st Battalion

Signs began to multiply that the enemy's morale was beginning to weaken even where he intended to stand his ground, which was not everywhere. It was therefore important to continue to worry him and to find out where he was prepared to give up ground and where he was prepared to resist—in other words, to establish the position of his main line of resistance if a major attack was ordered. This was the object of a series of affrays in which the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Modera, D.S.O., M.C.) was concerned in the second week in August. At 10 a.m. on 11th August, Lieutenant H. Laslett and two men reconnoitred a German machine-gun post which had been located in the south-west corner of "Celery Copse," close to the south side of the railway half a mile south-west of Merris. An hour and a half later he reported that the post was empty. Early in the afternoon Lieutenants I. Gorfunkle and S. J. Scurlock with two men reconnoitred the ground as far as "Alert Crossing," a level-crossing immediately south of Merris, and reported that they had seen no Germans. At the same time Serjeants A. Tippet and W. Hillidge and another man went along the eastern edge of Celery Copse and found it unoccupied. Unfortunately, snipers from near Lynde Farm, to the south of the Copse, hit and killed Tippet as the party returned. It was then decided to occupy Celery Copse and Lynde Farm. The left company, "B," dribbled its platoons forward to the eastern edge of the copse and established its position there by 5.30 p.m. "D" Company, on the right, sent forward a patrol of four men under Corporal A. Amsom to examine Lynde Farm. They met with no opposition until they reached a trench containing a number of shelters, which ran from the southern edge of Celery Copse to the farm. They worked up this trench to one of the shelters, were challenged from farther down the trench and from another of the shelters, and were fired on. They returned the fire and inflicted casualties. On the way back, Amsom was wounded but continued to lead his patrol coolly and brought back information on which the trench was severely bombarded by Stokes mortars. At 6.55 p.m. Lieutenant H. Laslett and fourteen men rushed the post and took prisoner a German N.C.O. and a wounded man. It transpired that the other twelve men of the garrison had deserted the post at dusk, but that the commander had refused to leave until he was properly relieved. "D" Company cleared up the situation at Lynde Farm, taking six prisoners and two machine guns, and enabled "B" Company to go forward at 8.30 p.m. 1ST BN.

During the afternoon of the next day the battalion tried to advance its line by "peaceful penetration" to some trucks on an old British siding close to the Merris–Vieux Berquin road. These were shelled for half an hour, at the end of which "B" Company sent out scouts supported by Lewis guns and riflemen. No. 7 Platoon reached the road, saw an enemy post and rushed it, taking six prisoners. It

then tried to work forward, but was stopped by heavy machine-gun fire from the trucks. The platoon commander, Lieutenant I. Gorfunkle, brought up a second Lewis gun round the end of the trucks and enfiladed the Germans behind them. The enemy suffered a number of casualties and some of them retired. But others returned the fire of the Lewis gun and killed Gorfunkle. The other forward platoon of the company was unable to make any progress, and Lieutenant S. J. Scurlock, who assumed command when Gorfunkle was killed and made a personal reconnaissance of the situation under heavy fire, decided to withdraw his company to its original position, which he did with skill, and to reorganize it. He also brought back very useful information as to the German dispositions. "D" Company, on the right, had little luck. After the bombardment of the trucks had ceased, the leading troops advanced about a hundred yards before they were met with such heavy machine-gun fire that all further movement was impossible. Attempts were made to counter the German fire with five Lewis guns, but although these succeeded in silencing two German machine guns near Labis Farm, five hundred yards to the south of the trucks, the machine guns were quickly replaced, and were moreover reinforced by an artillery barrage. This, together with the machine-gun fire from both flanks, made it impossible for the troops to maintain their position, and a withdrawal was ordered. At dusk the Germans put down another heavy barrage and delivered a counter-attack which forced the battalion's line back to its original position west of Celery Copse. The operation had been costly—the losses being 2 officers killed, 1 officer wounded and 80 other ranks killed and wounded—but it had achieved its object of locating the enemy's line of resistance and paved the way for its capture later by another unit under cover of an intense barrage which included 8-inch howitzers. Enemy snipers were very active on 13th August, but at night Second-Lieutenant L. A. Manly and Lance-Corporal C. E. Lovewell skilfully brought back parties of seven and twelve men who had been out all day in advanced positions, Manly having succeeded in getting very close to the enemy's position on the 12th but being unable to get back owing to the shelling. The following received awards for this affair:—

Military Cross

Lieutenant S. J. Scurlock. **Second-Lieutenant L. A. Manly.**

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Corporal A. Amsom.

Bar to Military Medal

Lance-Corporal W. Morgan, M.M.

Military Medal

Lance-Corporal C. E. Lovewell. **Private J. A. Astin.**
Private W. Broster. **Private J. Chambers.**
Private W. H. E. Chantler. **Private C. Gould.**
Private I. Iveson.

The Beginning of the End

"SECOND SOMME, 1918," "ALBERT, 1918"

1st/5th, 1st/7th, 1/8th, 10th, 15th, and 16th Battalions

The offensive launched on 8th August, 1918, had been so successful that the Commander-in-Chief decided to extend it northwards with a view to turning the line of the River Somme and thus making possible an eastward advance on a wide frontage. A preliminary operation on 21st August, in which the 125th Infantry Brigade took part, was designed to seize the enemy's main line of resistance on the Arras–Albert railway; and the general attack followed on the 23rd, with that brigade and the 10th, 15th, and 16th Battalions playing a part. The two actions gave the annals of the Regiment the lustre of two more Victoria Crosses, won within three days of each other.

1ST/5TH, 1ST/7TH AND 1ST/8TH BNS.

The 125th Brigade, consisting of the 1st/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Castle, M.C., Gloucestershire Regiment), the 1st/7th (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brewis, D.S.O., Welsh Regiment) and 1st/8th (Lieutenant-Colonel J. S. MacLeod, Durham Light Infantry) Battalions, had spent the summer at Sailly-au-Bois and Colincamps, near the scenes of its final struggles in the "March Retreat." As elsewhere, there were signs of a possible German withdrawal and constant vigilance was maintained for further similar indications.

It can rarely have happened that one man can have earned the Victoria Cross and the Distinguished Conduct Medal within a fortnight of each other. Yet that was the achievement of Lance-Serjeant E. Smith, 1st/5th Battalion. The story of his Victoria Cross will be told a little later in connexion with the attack of the 125th Infantry Brigade on the Dovecot at Beauregard on 21st, 22nd and 23rd August. It was on 10th August that he won the Medal in the same area. When out in command of a patrol of four men sent to reconnoitre the German line at Touvent Farm and Staff Copse, south-east of Hébuterne, to find out what truth there was in suspicions of an enemy withdrawal, he noticed an empty trench containing reasonably fresh food, chocolate, papers and other signs of recent occupation. Rightly surmising that the Germans occupied this trench at night, Smith and his patrol waited. In due course a party of Germans of an estimated strength of between thirty and forty came towards the trench, walking straight across the open. Smith held his fire till they were close to him. He then engaged them hotly, inflicting heavy casualties on them and scattering the survivors. He most skilfully withdrew his patrol and brought it safely back without loss. It was for this marked example of enterprise and leadership that he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

The first definite retirement by the Germans in this sector took place on 14th August, and "A" and "D" Companies of the 1st/7th were able to send out patrols just in front of Serre and establish a new line of posts there. The 1st/8th was equally able to advance its

position to the south-east of the village by means of fighting patrols, in the handling of one of which Second-Lieutenant F. H. Topham distinguished himself by his skill and determination; Serjeant Taylor, the signalling serjeant, also did good work in running communications forward to the new line. On the next day the two battalions continued to press forward with fighting patrols, which had to do some stiff fighting in places. Indeed, the Germans were not inclined to be hustled, as they showed on the 16th by attacking two of the new posts of the 1st 7th, though with no success in one case and only partial success in the other, and by repeating the process on the following day with similar results. As an additional deterrent to any hasty British action, the Germans heavily shelled the Serre ridge during these days. During this period the 1st/5th Battalion had continued to carry out training at the back of the divisional area, except that "B" Company had been moved forward to Fort Hood, south-west of Hébuterne, on 14th August, and that all the officers had reconnoitred the ground in front of Serre on 19th August.

On the 20th all the companies of the 1st/5th gathered in assembly positions west of the Beaumont Hamel–Puisieux-au-Mont road and final orders were issued for the attack on 21st. The 125th Brigade was the left of the two attacking brigades of the 42nd Division, with New Zealanders on its left. For this preliminary phase of the operation, the brigade had three objectives allotted to it. The first was Hill 140 and a strong-point known as "The Lozenge," about a mile south of Puisieux-au-Mont: this was to be the responsibility of the 1st 5th, less one company—and a heavy responsibility too, for The Lozenge was a nest of hostile machine guns and the key to the whole position. The second objective was some high ground about half a mile farther east to which the remaining company of the 1st/5th was to advance two hours after zero. The third objective was situated on either side of the junction of five roads, known as "Beauregard Dovecot," on high ground half a mile north-west of Miraumont, overlooking that village and the valley of the River Ancre: its importance is obvious from its description. To capture it was the task of half of the 1st/7th, which was to pass through the 1st/5th on the second objective four hours after zero. The 1st 8th was to remain in reserve.

Like the fatal 21st March, 21st August opened with a thick mist which made the keeping of direction difficult, though it very greatly helped the attacking troops to reach their starting points unseen. At 4.45 a.m. an excellent barrage gave the signal for the 1st/5th to advance, with "D" (Captain J. K. S. Page, M.C.), "A" (Second-Lieutenant J. Riley) and "C" (Captain A. W. Haywood, M.C.) Companies in front, and "B" Company (Captain C. E. Hartley) in support. Thanks to the mist and the barrage, the battalion had few casualties and soon possessed itself of the first objective, where Haywood helped greatly in speeding up re-organization, moving about in the open under heavy fire for the

purpose. "B" Company then passed through and by 7 a.m. had taken the second objective, though not without some fighting. It was here that Lance-Serjeant E. Smith performed the first of the series of gallant deeds which were to earn for him the Regiment's fourteenth Victoria Cross of the War. He was commanding a platoon but personally took a machine-gun post, rushing the garrison with his rifle and bayonet. The moment the Germans saw this solitary and apparently reckless attacker, they scattered in order to throw bombs at him. Regardless of the great danger to himself, he shot and killed at least six of them. He then led his platoon forward to the clearing of two more machine-gun posts, once more killing or capturing some of the garrison himself. Soon after, he noticed that a neighbouring platoon was in difficulties ; he took control of the situation and led both platoons forward to the objective, again killing many of the enemy himself. Corporal C. Greenhalgh also showed conspicuous gallantry and good leadership during this attack. He was in command of a Lewis-gun section ; but the platoon commander and platoon serjeants soon became casualties and he at once assumed command of the platoon and led it splendidly to the objective. Another who stepped into a breach caused by casualties was Private F. Hewson, who took command of a double Lewis-gun section when his three seniors had all fallen and worked forward so skilfully that he captured twenty prisoners in addition to his share of the objective. The battalion set to work to consolidate its objective and held it throughout the day, though much harassed by persistent German sniping.

At 8.55 a.m. "A" (Lieutenant W. J. O'Bryen, M.C.) and "B" (Captain E. C. Sington) Companies of the 1st 7th, which had begun to move forward at 2.30 a.m. and had followed the 1st/5th during the latter's advance, passed through and went forward to the third objective, which they succeeded in capturing with the exception of Beauregard Dovecot, where the presence of many German machine guns forbade any close approach. But touch had been lost with the New Zealanders and, when the great heat which was a marked feature of the operations on 21st and 22nd August caused the mist to lift, some men of the 1st/7th found themselves not only on their own but advancing on a German field battery which opened fire on them at point-blank range. A gallant attempt was made to hold a position in shell holes, but the enemy was in strong force and a fierce counter-attack practically wiped out the isolated party. At 2 a.m. on 22nd August, however, "A" Company of the 1st/7th succeeded in taking the Dovecot. Throughout this phase of the operation, members of the 1st/7th had displayed great gallantry, especially Lieutenants W. J. O'Bryen, M.C., and H. T. A. Ripperger who, finding their right flank in the air, attacked the enemy in that quarter and, in conjunction with another company, captured nearly a hundred prisoners.

At 4.45 a.m. on 22nd the Germans delivered a vigorous counter-attack under the protection of a heavy barrage. Both the 1st/5th and

1st/7th felt the effects of it, though they were able to beat it off with heavy losses and the capture of a number of prisoners. Here again Lance-Serjeant Smith of the 1st/5th did most valuable work by leading a section forward and restoring the line where it had been pierced. His courage, skilful handling of his weapons, his tactical ability and his natural powers of leadership were a great inspiration to all about him and helped to steady what might have been a critical situation. Serjeant J. Lea, of the 1st/5th, showed prompt courage and initiative: when a party of Germans tried to work round a machine gun which was holding up their progress, he collected his section and charged them, bayoneting or capturing the lot. Similar action was taken by Company Serjeant-Major F. J. Carless of the 1st 5th, who took ten prisoners and killed other Germans as a prelude to putting out posts to protect the gun against further attack. Corporal Greenhalgh of the 1st/5th once more came to the fore; he led out his Lewis-gun section and silenced a machine gun which was covering the Germans' advance, thereby contributing largely to the repulse of their attack. Company Serjeant-Major J. Fisher, D.C.M., M.M., of the 1st/5th, was another whose gallantry contributed to the German failure. He rallied and encouraged two platoons when the enemy barrage was at its worst; and when the only officer of his company was hit he took command of it and organized the defence so ably that it completely foiled all the enemy's efforts. Captain A. W. Haywood, M.C., also did splendid work in ensuring that the defences held. O'Bryen of the 1st/7th led a party on to the capture of a strong-point which was causing trouble. Unfortunately, the fire of German machine guns from the other side of the Ancre valley was so heavy and so deadly that the 1st/7th was compelled to withdraw slightly to the reverse slope of the third objective and to occupy new positions which had wisely been prepared during the previous afternoon. The Germans renewed their efforts at 7 p.m. but, being caught in their own barrage as well as in the British defensive fire, had to fall back to their own line.

The final capture of the Dovecot was achieved early on the morning of the 23rd when "A" (Captain D. G. Bird) and "D" (Captain S. D. Harrison, M.C.) Companies of the 1st/8th, acting under the orders of the 1st/7th, assembled on a line running east and west (and thus enfilading the German position) and attacked at 2.30 a.m. diagonally across the front of the 1st/7th. This daring and most difficult operation was a complete success, the more so as the Germans were taken entirely by surprise. By 2.40 a.m. the two companies had seized the high ground west of the Dovecot which constituted their first objective; and by 2.50 a.m., getting home with the bayonet and clearing all before them, they gained possession of the Dovecot itself, together with twelve machine guns and fifty prisoners. Second-Lieutenant F. H. Topham, whose good work on 14th August has already been mentioned, led his men very well under heavy fire in this attack and was responsible for the capture

of many of these prisoners. Another skilful platoon commander was Serjeant J. J. Nickson, who personally led his men on with the bayonet and killed or captured a number of the enemy. Corporal J. Dolan made the objective secure by turning his Lewis gun on to a German post which he noticed on his right flank where the attack had been pushed home, and then personally leading a bombing attack which drove off the garrison and captured the gun.

From the excellent line thus obtained, troops of other formations continued the operations later on 23rd; and the 1st/7th Battalion and the two attached companies of the 1st/8th were squeezed out of the line and withdrew to the neighbourhood of Hébuterne, the remainder of the brigade moving to the same area on 24th August. The casualties of the 1st/7th and 1st/8th during this operation are not recorded, but the 1st/5th lost 1 officer and 20 other ranks killed, 1 officer and 66 other ranks wounded, and 8 men missing. The decorations awarded were :—

Victoria Cross

Lance-Serjeant E. Smith, 1st/5th.

Bar to Military Cross

Captain A. W. Haywood, M.C., 1st/8th. Lieutenant W. J. O'Bryen, M.C., 1st/7th.

Military Cross

Lieutenant H. T. A. Ripperger, 1st/7th. Second-Lieutenant F. H. Topham, 1st/8th.

Bar to Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major J. Fisher, D.C.M., M.M., 1st/5th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major F. J. Carless, 1st/5th.
Serjeant J. J. Nickson, 1st/8th.
Corporal C. Greenhalgh, 1st/5th.
Serjeant J. Lea, 1st 5th.
Corporal J. Dolan, 1st/8th.
Private F. Hewson, 1st/5th.

Military Medal

Serjeant H. Cawley, 1st/5th.
Corporal T. H. Drage, 1st/8th.
Private F. Evans, 1st/7th.
Private H. Jackson, 1st/8th.
Serjeant A. Garlick, 1st/7th.
Lance-Corporal T. Oliver, 1st/8th.
Private F. Haigh, 1st/8th.
Private J. Pickerill, 1st/7th.
Private W. Spedding, 1st/8th.

Immediately after the events just described, a development of the success achieved resulted in the winning of another Victoria Cross, the Regiment's fifteenth in the war. The 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cotton), which for some weeks had been in and near Aveluy Wood, was in reserve near Acheux on 23rd August when it received orders to move forward to its old trenches facing the River Ancre. During that night the Germans began to retire and the battalion moved forward early on the 24th, crossing the Ancre by a much-damaged causeway over the marshy ground on both sides of the stream, which had to be waded. The advance was continued, behind the 10th West Yorkshire Regiment, to the high ground north of Thiepval. In the afternoon the battalion was ordered to continue its advance towards Courcelette. Owing to some loss of direction by other units, the leading companies of the

10TH BN.

10th found themselves eventually alongside, instead of behind, the West Yorkshire, and encountered strong opposition from the direction of that village. After an order to advance towards Martinpuich had been cancelled, the battalion took up a position for the night on a line running north and south about a mile south-west of Courcelette. At 1.30 a.m. orders were received for an eastward thrust to take place at 4 a.m., with Martinpuich as the first objective, the 12th Manchester Regiment passing to the south and the 10th Battalion to the north of the village, joining hands on the far side and then "mopping up" the place itself. The village was strongly held with machine guns and the Germans heavily shelled the advancing troops, causing a number of casualties. The garrison was eventually driven out, but the shelling prevented any British troops remaining in the village. Later "B" (Captain T. Howarth, M.C.) and "D" (Captain F. W. Brittnell) Companies of the 10th secured a foothold in the trenches north of the village. Second-Lieutenant L. G. Holgate led his platoon with great gallantry and was largely instrumental in securing the success of the attack. He was seriously wounded but refused to be moved to the rear until three even more seriously wounded men had been carried to the aid post. The advance continued in the afternoon, with "C" (Captain L. H. Gibbs) and "A" (Captain I. Sankey) leading and "B" and "D" in support. The two leading companies diverged somewhat during their advance, and "B" and "D" again found themselves in the leading line. When the troops reached a crest about half a mile to the east of Martinpuich, a large body of Germans, estimated at three companies, was seen advancing down the forward slope of the next ridge deployed for a counter-attack. The 10th Battalion quickly manned some handy trenches, even the battalion headquarters extending the line under the personal leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel Cotton, before the Germans were on them at about 4.15 p.m. At this moment, four machine guns of the 17th Machine Gun Company happened to arrive, and with their aid the counter-attack was eventually stopped, though it was pressed with great determination and with the evident intention of retaking Martinpuich. The garrison of an advanced trench hastily occupied by "B" Company suffered particularly heavy casualties. Serjeant H. J. Colley, M.M., of that company, grasping the situation, rushed forward on his own initiative to help them, and rallied and controlled them. By this time the enemy had already obtained a lodgement in the trench. Colley formed a defensive flank, held up the enemy, and eventually drove them out. Only three men of the garrison were by this time unwounded, and Colley himself was so dangerously wounded that he died that night. It was entirely due to his action that the enemy were prevented from breaking through and his courage and tenacity saved a very critical situation and won for him a posthumous Victoria Cross. Another gallant act at this time was performed by Corporal G. Thomas, who went out with an officer to within fifty yards of the enemy and killed three of them as they were

bringing a machine gun into action. He then brought back information which enabled fire to be directed at the vital points of the enemy's line and thus contributed most usefully to the stopping of the attack.

But the battalion was not disposed to rest content with merely arresting the enemy's progress. At about 7 p.m. Captain T Howarth, M.C., led some thirty men of "B" Company in an attempt to dislodge two machine guns on the left of the battalion's front. But although his leadership was skilful and he showed a fine disregard of danger, the fire of German machine guns elsewhere was too strong for him and the attempt had to be abandoned. At dusk Private J. Cadman, of battalion headquarters, went out and, observing two of the enemy isolated, brought them back as prisoners. During the night the battalion re-formed behind the 9th Duke of Wellington's Regiment, which had passed through the line at 1 a.m. to continue the attack in the direction of Flers. As the 26th August progressed, the German resistance stiffened once more, and in the afternoon the 10th Battalion was ordered to try to pass through the 12th Manchester Regiment, which had attempted an outflanking movement, but the only result was serious congestion in the forward positions and no progress. After dark the battalion relieved the Manchester in the line, and was later relieved itself. The approximate casualties were 1 officer and 50 men killed, 4 officers and 150 men wounded, 1 officer wounded and missing and 18 men missing. The honours awarded were :—

Victoria Cross
Serjeant H. J. Colley, M.M.

Bar to Military Cross
Captain T. Howarth, M.C.

Military Cross
Second-Lieutenant L. G. Holgate.

Distinguished Conduct Medal
Corporal G. Thomas.

Military Medal
Serjeant G. A. Batten. Corporal W. Gledhill.
Private J. W. Cadman.

15TH AND 16TH BNS.

Also taking part in this stage of the offensive were the 15th (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. R. G. Alban, D.S.O., The King's Regiment) and 16th (Major A. G. Macdonald, D.S.O., Royal Berkshire Regiment, in temporary command) Battalions. At 4.45 a.m. on 23rd August the latter attacked, in company with Australian and other troops, and succeeded in advancing their line some three hundred yards near Lihons. Three companies were used and considerable opposition was met on the right ; but it was eventually overcome, three prisoners being taken together with seven machine guns and two light trench mortars. Both battalions consolidated and held the line in readiness for a further move forward a few days later. Private W. Fowler, of

the 16th Battalion, particularly distinguished himself by his fearless journeys to and fro with messages under all sorts of conditions. In the small hours of the 25th the 16th Battalion was subjected to heavy mustard-gas shelling for a prolonged period, resulting in 15 officers and 429 other ranks becoming casualties. Nevertheless at 7 a.m. the battalion succeeded in advancing its left two hundred yards and taking a wounded officer prisoner.

A CLEVERLY PLANNED SURPRISE AT GIVENCHY

2nd/5th Battalion

Although the gallant resistance of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division on 9th April, 1918, had prevented the Germans from securing all the observation to be obtained from the Givenchy ridge, they had achieved a sufficient measure of success to give them command of much of the area behind the British line. In any case, the British had no observation worthy of the name behind the German trenches. It was therefore decided in August that the line of the craters on the crest of the ridge should be seized with a view to reversing the position. The German division holding this part of the line was weak and inclined to take things easily. Steps were taken to lull it still further into a sense of security, so that it could be surprised in daylight. It had been noticed that the German garrison's dawn "stand-to" ended at about 6.30 a.m. and that they then proceeded to overhaul their machine guns and retire below into their dug-outs for breakfast, leaving a few sentries in the trench. For a fortnight before the date fixed for the attack, they were carefully and skilfully schooled in various ways, so as to accept as a matter of course certain British activities needed for the assault. For instance, trench mortars fired a few rounds daily between 7 and 8 a.m., so that the Germans acquired the habit of staying in their dug-outs at that time. An aeroplane likewise flew regularly over the craters between 6 and 8 a.m., showing lights in response to which the infantry fired rockets : the Germans who were not in the dug-outs naturally tended to look upwards at this illuminated display. Wire-cutting was effected by occasional rounds from field guns and by special patrols. As a precaution against any leakage, however unintentional, on the part of any British prisoner who might be captured in the days before the operation, each company was told to prepare plans for a raid on its immediate front in order that no impression of a bigger operation should be given, though the plans were co-ordinated by the battalion and brigade commanders so that they formed a complete scheme for an attack by two battalions.

The two units chosen to carry out this interesting action were the 1st/4th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment on the right and the
2ND/5TH BN. 2nd 5th Lancashire Fusiliers (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O., who had suggested and worked out the scheme) on the left. They were relieved on 20th August and had the scheme fully

explained with the help of plasticine models. On the night of 23rd/24th August they moved back to the line and were joined by Royal Engineers, pioneers and miners. Early in the morning of 24th August, snipers crawled out in the grass in front of the British lines to deal with any Germans who showed unwelcome curiosity to their front : as the Brigade War Diary quaintly records, "several German sentries were cancelled by these snipers." There was no preliminary bombardment by the artillery, but the trench mortars fired as usual and the aeroplane carried out its daily flight. On this occasion, however, the red rocket sent up by the infantry at 7.20 a.m. was the signal for the launching of the attack ; and the aeroplane flew beyond the far lips of the craters in order both to draw the attention of the German sentries behind them and also to fire on the enemy's machine guns. Silently the assaulting troops climbed out of their trenches and had made their way across the hundred yards of No Man's Land to the German lines before the garrisons could fire a shot or get into action more than a single machine gun, which was instantly silenced by Corporal J. C. Johnson of the 2nd/5th who saw it about to be fired and rushed it. Within ten minutes all the 2nd/5th Battalion's objectives had been gained and it was twelve minutes after zero before the enemy artillery opened fire. Work on the consolidation of the positions won was put in hand at once and patrols were sent out to a distance of about a hundred yards along the German communication trenches. Many Germans who fled over the far lips of the craters on the arrival of the British were caught in the open by rifle and Lewis-gun fire. Second-Lieutenants W. Forster, M.C., and G. Walsh did very useful work at this stage, as also did Second-Lieutenant F. Bolton who, although wounded early in the attack, continued to lead his men and help with consolidation, remaining with them for twelve hours and then only leaving to have his wound attended to when ordered to do so.

The consolidation was soon tested ; for at 9.30 a.m. the Germans attempted a counter-attack with two companies, which were soon shattered by artillery, Lewis-gun and rifle fire. The work of putting the new line in order was thereafter continued steadily during the day, though under heavy fire, Lance-Corporal C. E. Gwilt being particularly useful in methodically carrying out anti-gas measures for twelve hours without rest, preventing many casualties from this cause. Lance-Corporal J. Lumb continued at work for thirty-six hours, although he had been wounded at the outset and, unable to walk, had crawled after his section to rejoin it in one of the most advanced positions in the battalion. Patrolling was maintained as before ; and Corporal D. E. Byrom, who had taken command of his platoon when its commander was killed, skilfully led two patrols with which he maintained touch with the enemy and obtained much useful information. At 8 p.m. a barrage was put down behind the enemy lines to break up any possible preparations for another counter-attack ; but although shelling continued, it was not until 5.5 a.m. on 25th that the Germans again attempted to recapture the

craters, with entire lack of success, largely because the eastern lip of the crater commanded a full view of the country as far as La Bassée—a striking proof of the value of the operation. Here again Forster showed great coolness. Throughout the day the German artillery kept up considerable harassing fire. At one stage Second-Lieutenant G. Walsh and some of his men were buried by the burst of a shell. He managed to extricate himself and then worked feverishly for twenty-five minutes under shell fire digging out his men. There were, however, no further attacks; and the 2nd/5th was relieved on 27th August and went to Vaudricourt, after noticing significant fires and explosions behind the German lines which were rightly interpreted as indications of a forthcoming retirement. The battalion's casualties in this operation were 11 N.C.Os. and men killed, 1 officer and 41 other ranks wounded, and 2 men missing. The gratification of the authorities at the skill with which the attack had been made was shown by congratulatory messages from the Divisional and Corps Commanders, stressing the good work of junior leaders, and by the generous award of honours which were as follows :—

Bar to Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant W. Forster, M.C.

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant F. Bolton.
Second-Lieutenant G. Walsh.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Corporal D. E. Byrom.
Corporal J. C. Johnson.
Lance-Corporal C. E. Gwilt.
Lance-Corporal J. Lumb.

Bar to Military Medal

Lance-Corporal F. Fitzpatrick, M.M.

Military Medal

Serjeant C. Greenwood.
Serjeant J. Tranter.
Serjeant K. Wilkinson.
Serjeant J. Williams.
Lance-Corporal J. Bolton.
Lance-Corporal A. Harrison.
Lance-Corporal J. H. Oakley.
Lance-Corporal G. Price.
Lance-Corporal J. Worrall.
Private G. Boniface.
Private W. Moore.
Private S. Simms.
Private W. G. Stubbs.
Private F. E. Turner.
Private J. E. Waterhouse.
Private G. Weightman.
Private R. Whatmough.

The Advance Begins in the North

1st and 23rd Battalions

The signs of an impending German withdrawal, referred to a little earlier, had been multiplying in all parts of Flanders. The strain on the enemy's reserves caused by the successful Allied attacks in the south had made some shortening of his lines necessary; and towards the end of August the evacuation of the Lys salient, between
1st Bn. La Bassée and Ypres, was in full flow. On 30th August the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Modera, D.S.O., M.C.), in the line at Strazeele, was able to push forward patrols from "B" and

"D" Companies which met with practically no resistance and reached the hamlet of Noote Boome, two and a half miles south-east of Merris. Large fires, extending for some miles, could be seen behind the German lines, telling of the destruction of stores which could not be removed. Other battalions passed through the 1st, which was left in reserve until 3rd September when it moved forward to take part in an attack which will be described a few pages farther on.

A more sustained advance, and a more difficult as the battalion was originally a garrison unit and was therefore composed largely of men of low medical category forbidden to wear packs, was that of the 23rd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. Hesketh, D.S.O., T.D.). 23RD BN. The unit was detailed as the main guard of the 40th Division's advanced guard for its march forward from the Forest of Nieppe which began on 29th August, following up the retiring Germans. On 3rd September, in spite of machine-gun fire and sniping, the battalion established a line of posts along the River Steenbecque. Next day there was some sharp fighting near Croix du Bac and the battalion lost two officers and a large number of N.C.Os. and men. But it scored successes. Corporal J. W. Williams, M.M., succeeded in locating a machine gun which was holding up his company and immediately opened fire, forcing its team to withdraw. His company was then able to push on. Later, with his company commander (Lieutenant E. L. Thorogood), he rushed a machine-gun post, capturing three prisoners, including an officer.

By now the enemy's resistance was clearly stiffening on the line of the River Lys, and the battalion suffered somewhat severely from frontal and enfilade fire between Pont de Nieppe (where the Nieppe—Armentières road crosses the Lys) and Jesus Farm, a mile west of Armentières, before it managed to establish posts on the river on 5th September. The honours awarded for this operation included :—

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Corporal J. W. Williams, M.M.

Military Medal

Serjeant R. Lloyd-Bryant. Corporal A. Raby.
Private S. Evison. Private P. W. Pitt.
Private T. E. Thornton.

The Approach to the Hindenburg Line

"SECOND SOMME, 1918," "SECOND BAPAUME, 1918," "SECOND ARRAS, 1918," "DROCOURT-QUÉANT"

2nd, 1st/5th, 1st/7th, 1st/8th and 10th Battalions

In the meanwhile, further blows were being rained on the Germans in the south so as to give them no respite. On 31st August the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cotton) received 10TH BN. orders to deal with Le Transloy on the following day very much as it had dealt with Martinpuich a few days earlier : that is to say, it was to work round the village from the north while the Duke of

Wellington's Regiment worked round the south, the two units then joining hands and taking a line about two hundred yards east of the main Péronne–Bapaume road. This operation was to be preceded at midnight by the capture of Le Transloy cemetery by "C" Company of the 10th Battalion. The night was very dark and the ground was covered by a mass of old wire-entanglements and trenches, dating from 1916 and 1917, as well as new wire which the Germans had recently put out. "C" Company lost direction and did not gain its objective. Another attempt was made at 4.20 a.m., but the enemy began to use "Blue Cross" gas, which caused the men to sneeze, alarmed the Germans and brought about such a heavy fire by artillery and machine guns that no progress could be made. Two platoons remained in touch with the enemy about two hundred yards in front of their original position, but the remainder had to withdraw to it. The main attack began at 5.40 a.m., with "A" Company on the right and "D" Company on the left in front, and "C" and "B" Companies in support. "D" Company quickly made good progress and, in spite of heavy machine-gun fire, advanced to within two hundred yards of the main road. Unfortunately, the division on the left had not been able to make such good progress, and "D" Company found itself not only unable to advance farther but seriously exposed. Many casualties were incurred ; and, as "A" Company had been held up by heavy artillery and machine-gun fire after advancing about two hundred yards, "D" Company was compelled to withdraw, with "A," to the starting line. Late the same day the battalion was relieved and moved south to a position near Morval. It was in reserve during an attack by two other battalions on 2nd September. But "D" Company had to be called upon to make good some high ground about a mile north-west of Sailly-Saillisel. It succeeded in its mission, but once again found itself out of touch with units on its flanks and had to remain in a very dangerous position until it was relieved and rejoined the battalion on 3rd September at Rocquigny station. Military Medals were awarded to Company Serjeant-Major H. Ashton, Serjeants S. M. Crabtree and G. Pike, Lance-Serjeant F. Smith and Privates F. Teasdale and L. J. J. Power.

2ND BN. The 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. A. Kirkby, D.S.O.) moved down from Flanders at the end of August and was sent once more to the trenches it knew so well near Monchy-le-Preux. On 1st September orders were received that the battalion was to take part in an attack on the Drocourt–Quéant Line on the following day. The preparations were not helped by the persistent gas shelling which caused the unit to lose Second-Lieutenant C. Dunlevy, M.C., about noon and Captain G. N. Stange, M.C., in the afternoon, both belonging to "A" Company. Nevertheless, by the evening the battalion had assembled north of Rémy and close behind the two leading battalions of the 12th Infantry Brigade, the 2nd Essex Regiment and the 1st King's Own. Further difficulties were caused by the facts that "A" (Second-Lieutenant H. W. Montgomery) and

"D" (Second-Lieutenant D. McIntosh) Companies had each to provide a carrying party in the evening to take ammunition to forward dumps and that "A" Company had also to attach two platoons to the King's Own for the blocking on the left of the first two trenches of the Drocourt–Quéant Line. The carrying parties were kept at work until the rest of the battalion had formed up and were unable to rejoin their companies until dawn. Very valuable work was done before the battle by Lieutenant A. R. Topping. He carried out several road reconnaissances under considerable difficulties and heavy shell fire; while at night he succeeded in bringing up the transport with its precious load of ammunition, rations and water through many obstacles, including shell fire which had destroyed an important bridge.

At 5 a.m. on 2nd September the barrage for the attack came down. Very soon after, the battalion suffered a severe loss in the death of Captain G. G. ("Granny") Bowen, M.C., an outstanding and much-loved officer, whose funeral two days later was attended by all available officers and the whole of his own "B" Company. The attack took a confused course; and the battalion, although nominally in support, was involved at an early stage in some stiff fighting. Second-Lieutenant D. McIntosh and his runner, Private J. B. Currie, saw two German field guns firing on the British front line and the tanks supporting the attack—indeed one tank had been put out of action—but McIntosh took a few of his men and rushed the guns, killing an officer and three men at one gun and taking the rest prisoner, while Currie worked his way round to the flank of the other gun, shot the officer as he was about to reload it, and with the help of a serjeant rounded up the crew. By 9 a.m. the brigade's objectives had been taken, except on the left near Etaing, with many prisoners. Most of the rest of the day was spent in consolidation, under great difficulties owing to constant shell fire and the arrival of additional German machine guns on the ridge east of Eterpigny, which caused numerous casualties and reduced "A" Company's remaining officers to one very junior officer, recently arrived from England. Later, the battalion was ordered to withdraw from its position on the day's objective and form up on the "Orange Line," north of Eterpigny, in readiness for an attack on Etaing. The companies were very scattered, there was no telephone communication and few of the runners—the real heroes of every battle—knew the way to "B," "C" or "D" Companies, which had gone farther to the right than had been intended. The result was that when zero for the new attack came at 5 a.m. on 3rd September, only "A" Company was fully ready and in position, and the others had to be thrown in as soon as they arrived. Corporal S. J. J. Leech was of the greatest assistance at this stage to the inexperienced commander of "A" Company: for the company serjeant-major and all the serjeants became casualties and it fell to him to advise his officer, which he did with laudable judgement and coolness, materially contributing to the steadiness and good organization of the

company. Fortunately, the enemy had withdrawn from Etaing during the night, leaving a small rear-guard, of whom a dozen were taken prisoner. The battalion was able to push forward through the village and take up a position in the old front line, with posts on the left flank watching the crossings over the River Sensée. The unit was relieved that night and marched back to Crater Subway close to the Arras–Cambrai road, where as usual Lieutenant-Colonel W. Bowes, D.S.O., the invaluable quartermaster, had ready everything needful. The casualties during this operation had been 1 officer and 22 other ranks killed and 6 officers and 158 other ranks wounded. The decorations awarded included :—

Military Cross

Lieutenant A. R. Topping. 2nd Lieutenant D. McIntosh.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Corporal S. J. J: Leech. Private J. B. Currie.

By now the enemy was beginning to fall back rapidly to the shelter of the Hindenburg Line. Since its successful attacks at Puisieux-au-Mont and Miraumont on 23rd and 24th August, the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division had been pressing on close behind the retreating Germans, who turned constantly to fight rear-guard actions. The 125th (Lancashire Fusiliers) Infantry Brigade followed in reserve until 2nd September when the 1st/8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. S. MacLeod, Durham Light Infantry) took over part of the forward line near Riencourt-les-Bapaume. Early next morning its patrols found that Villers-au-Flos had been evacuated and by 7 a.m. the battalion had seized all the high ground east of that village. The brigade was thereupon ordered to pass through the troops holding the line, and the 1st/8th provided the advanced guard, with a mounted troop of the Royal Scots Greys attached. By 1 p.m. the village of Bus had been occupied, and before 4.30 p.m. the 1st/8th had reached the western edge of Ytres, being helped by the cavalry who worked round to Lechelle but there came under such heavy machine-gun fire that they had to be ordered back to Bus. At 4.30 p.m. "B" (Captain D. Cumming, M.C.) and "C" (Captain A. Parke, M.C.) Companies passed through the leading troops and pushed forward to within a few yards of the enemy's main positions, where the battalion remained until relieved by New Zealanders on 6th September after undergoing very heavy shelling with much gas. During the night of 3rd/4th September the 1st/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Castle, M.C.) moved to assembly positions west of the railway between Bus and Ytres, ready to continue the advance. At 7 a.m. on 4th September "B" (Captain C. E. Hartley) and "C" (Captain A. W. Haywood, M.C.) Companies moved forward but encountered stiff opposition, "B" being held up by artillery and machine-gun fire and losing all but one of its officers but managing none the less to establish a line three hundred yards east of the Canal du Nord. A further attack was

1ST/8TH BN.

1ST/5TH BN.

launched at 7 p.m. by "A" Company (Second-Lieutenant J. Riley) and "C" Company, in which the latter succeeded in gaining a foothold in Neuville Bourjonval. At dawn on 5th September "B" Company pushed posts forward and "A" Company established posts in the village in front of "C" Company. Heavy shelling continued and elements of the enemy clung to some trenches east of Neuville. "D" Company of the 1st/7th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brewis, D.S.O.) was therefore ordered to clear the Germans out of this position. Forming up in the main street of the village at 4.30 p.m., it advanced at 5.30 p.m. behind a creeping barrage. Second-Lieutenant C. M. Pearson led two platoons with great determination, capturing two machine guns with two officers and thirty men; while Lieutenant A. F. Worden led his platoon to the capture of three machine-gun nests with seventy prisoners and eight machine guns. Three platoons of the company were soon held up by enfilading machine-gun fire; but the fourth managed to reach its objective, thanks largely to the courage and dash of Serjeant J. A. Smith, Lance-Serjeant M. Pinder and Lance-Corporals H. Boardman and T. Prince, who rushed machine-gun posts in spite of the superior numbers and weight of fire facing them. The enemy then tried to send a large party round Worden's flank; but he formed a defensive front and drove them off, inflicting heavy casualties on them, including some to his own account. Boardman's Lewis-gun section was at one time surrounded by large numbers of the enemy; but he handled his gun so promptly and skilfully that he dispersed them. Pearson, too, took a part in this stage of the action: although his platoon was now only five strong, he succeeded in getting in touch with the troops on his right and in capturing yet another machine-gun nest. The decorations awarded for this spirited action by the 1st/7th included:— 1ST/7TH BN.

Military Cross

Lieutenant A. F. Worden. Second-Lieutenant C. M. Pearson.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Serjeant J. A. Smith. Lance-Serjeant M. Pinder.
Lance-Corporal H. Boardman. Lance-Corporal T. Prince.

Military Medal

Lance-Corporal S. Brierley. Lance-Corporal B. Taylor.
Lance-Corporal E. Watson. Private J. H. Ball.
Private F. Edmunds. Private J. W. Mann.

The brigade was relieved that night and moved back to Pys, where it enjoyed a rest of three weeks in corps reserve.

The 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cotton) took up the running only a short distance to the south of where the 125th Brigade had halted. After a few days' rest, from its exertions on 3rd September, it marched forward on 6th September to take over a reserve position south of Ytres. At dawn on 7th September it moved on with orders to "mop up" Dessart Wood, north-east of Fins. Patrols found the wood empty of Germans but full of gas and 10TH BN.

the subject of constant attention from German artillery, as it continued to be all day. It was therefore left severely alone. The following day was comparatively quiet until the evening, when companies advanced to get into position for an attack next day on two lines of trenches south-west of Gouzeaucourt. This approach march proved to be very difficult as the night was extremely dark and the German artillery was very active, particularly with "Blue Cross" gas. "A" Company suffered a number of casualties at this stage and was given a platoon of "C" Company to make up for its losses, while companies and platoons tended to become intermingled and to lose direction. Nevertheless, all companies were in position by 3.15 a.m. on 9th September. Zero was three-quarters of an hour later, when a good though rather too rapidly moving barrage came down, followed about five minutes later by the German counter-barrage. The latter included much gas which, combined with the intense darkness still prevailing, made it most difficult for the troops to keep their correct direction and formation. The result was that companies became mixed and the right support company, "D" (Captain F. W. Brittnell), went too far to the right. Nevertheless, the leading companies, "A" (Second-Lieutenant J. M. Hamilton) on the right and "C" (Captain L. H. Gibbs) on the left, pressed forward, "C" meeting heavy machine-gun fire on reaching the forward German trench, Heather Support. Parties worked round the flanks, captured a machine gun and destroyed the crew; and by 5.10 a.m. the first objective had been captured, thanks largely to the determination and initiative of Hamilton and Second-Lieutenant W. Davidson, both of whom collected small bodies of men and outflanked the enemy. Gibbs also distinguished himself and killed two of the enemy with his revolver as he led his company to clear the objective. At this stage the support companies should have passed through and gone forward to the second objective, but owing to their having lost direction they failed to do so. "D" Company on the right met with opposition near a light railway line, but succeeded in capturing eight prisoners and two light machine guns, besides killing a number of the enemy. It then moved on and captured a trench some way to the south of its proper position, but worked north along it until it gained touch with "A" Company. In the process it "mopped up" a German strong point and inflicted many casualties.

In the meanwhile Hamilton, realizing that the support companies were not passing through the first objective, had begun to lead his own "A" Company forward with some men of "B" Company (Captain M. J. H. Drummond), who had joined him. He reached Heather Trench, the final objective, quite quickly, but was immediately bombed by the enemy. Moreover, a German machine gun opened fire about a hundred yards in front of the position; but Corporal C. Liddamore at once went forward on his own initiative and himself brought back the gun and its gunner. Eight other Germans were also taken prisoner and sent back under escort;

almost at the same time about a hundred Germans attacked from behind the left of the company, rescued the prisoners and captured their escort. Hamilton's party was by now almost surrounded; yet he attacked the enemy's right flank and fought his way back to the first objective, helped by fire organized by the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cotton, who had come forward and now took control of the situation. By 8 a.m. a firm line had been organized in Heather Support Trench with "D" Company on the right, two platoons of the 9th Duke of Wellington's Regiment and "A" and "C" Companies with the majority of "B" Company in the centre, and a platoon of the latter on the left. Soon after, the Germans began to counter-attack down the Gouzeaucourt–Fins road, taking Heather Support Trench in flank. They reached the trench but were quickly bombed out of it and completely held up. The line was consolidated in spite of frequent sniping and occasional bursts of shell fire throughout the day. The battalion was relieved that night and moved to the north of Equancourt, having lost during the day 12 men killed, 2 officers and 62 other ranks wounded and 14 men missing. The decorations awarded were :—

Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cotton.

Military Cross

Captain L. H. Gibbs. Second-Lieutenant J. M. Hamilton.
Second-Lieutenant W. Davidson.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Corporal A. C. Liddamore.

Bar to Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major T. Pearson, M.M.

Military Medal

Private D. Robertson. Private G. G. Williams.

Pressure continues in the North

1st, 2nd/5th, 17th and 18th Battalions

In the meanwhile the German withdrawal in the Lys valley which has been mentioned earlier was being closely followed. Since the capture of the Givenchy craters on 24th August, the 2nd 5th Battalion (Major J. H. Evans, M.C., 1st 4th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, in temporary command while Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O., commanded the 164th Infantry Brigade) had taken every opportunity to push forward its patrols and to consolidate any ground which they were able to occupy. Even so the enemy was by no means disposed to let his positions go entirely by default and on 5th September he counter-attacked a post which the battalion had established in a trench known as "Canteleux Alley South," two thousand yards east of Givenchy. The attempt was unsuccessful and the attackers lost heavily. On 6th September "B" (Captain L. A. Wilson) and "D" (Captain J. R. 2ND/5TH BN.

Bodington, M.C.) Companies attacked a trench to the south of Canteleux Alley South known as "Canal Reserve," seized it and held it against several counter-attacks. Second-Lieutenant A. R. B. Noble behaved with great gallantry and vigour during this operation, both in the initial attack and later, especially when he had only four men left in his platoon but yet repelled a German bombing attack and defeated a further attack by well-directed rifle fire. He received the Military Cross for his inspiring coolness and good work.

1st Bn. A more important operation in its effect on events as a whole was that carried out by the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Modera, D.S.O., M.C.), which was ordered to assist in the taking of Ploegsteert, regarded as the key to the enemy's main line of resistance in this area, on 4th September in conjunction with other attacks on the flanks. The unit moved at dusk on 3rd September to its assembly positions, which were very difficult to find as the country was strange and the maps were poor, while the Germans were nervous, lit the sky with flares and swept the roads with machine-gun fire. The second-in-command, Major T. Slingsby, M.C., on approaching a post which should have been behind the British lines according to the information supplied, was challenged in German and had to withdraw precipitately, followed by machine-gun bullets and by his runner, who had to tear his way through a wire entanglement at the cost of his steel helmet and part of his trousers! It proved that much of the line laid down as the starting point of the attack was still in German hands. By 4.15 a.m., however, on 4th September the battalion was formed up, with "A" and "C" Companies in front, "D" and "B" in support and reserve respectively. During its assembly, "A" Company was much troubled by machine-gun fire from behind its right flank. This proved to come from the post which had already been so inconsiderate to Major Slingsby and his runner. The post was dealt with and yielded a capture of nine Germans and two machine guns. Shortly before zero a party of about fifty Germans succeeded in working round the right flank of "A" Company with two machine guns, which opened heavy fire. Serjeant W. Mullane took six men and, under cover of Lewis-gun fire, charged the party, which, after losing several killed, surrendered with their guns.

The attack was launched at 8 a.m. with rather a weak barrage as the bulk of the available artillery was being used for what was expected to be the stiffer resistance elsewhere. As a result, "A" Company was able to advance only a few yards before it was held up by heavy machine-gun and trench-mortar fire. "C" Company on the left also met with strong opposition on its right; but one of its platoons, under Second-Lieutenant G. McK. Bruce, reached its objective close to "Hyde Park Corner," at a bend in the Ploegsteert–Messines road in the northern part of Ploegsteert Wood, and helped to protect the right flank of the unit on the left, though its own right flank was in the air. Another barrage was arranged for 3 p.m. when the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers captured the village of Ploegsteert

and "A" and "C" Companies were enabled to advance and to capture twenty-five prisoners and three machine guns. In spite of considerable interference from machine-gun and artillery fire, the new line was consolidated by 7 p.m., Captain C. Wedgwood taking a prominent part in mopping up several posts, one of which he rushed himself, killing several of its garrison. But throughout the day Bruce had had to face a very difficult situation, as his right flank was still exposed and was nearly five hundred yards in front of the nearest troops to the south. Five times the enemy tried to work round this danger spot, but each time Bruce and his platoon, though vastly outnumbered, drove them back with heavy losses. He maintained his position gallantly for eight hours before other platoons were able to come up on his right and establish contact with him.

During the night "B" and "D" Companies relieved the weary "A" and "C"; and at 5.30 a.m. on 5th September they moved on after a short barrage and, in spite of some machine-gun fire and not a little sniping, gradually worked forward until the battalion's final objective east of Ploegsteert was gained at 11.30 a.m. The battalion was relieved during the afternoon of 5th September and marched back to Outtersteene. Its booty in this attack had been one officer and forty-two other ranks prisoners and five machine guns: its losses were 1 officer and 12 other ranks killed, 9 officers and 53 other ranks wounded, and 5 men missing. The rewards given included:—

Military Cross

Captain C. Wedgwood. Second-Lieutenant G. McK. Bruce.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Serjeant W. Mullane.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major H. Rhodes. Serjeant T. Garlick.
Corporal N. Brown. Corporal R. Hilton.
Private F. O. Harmer. Private P. Leyland.
Private J. Redgrave. Private H. Walden.

17TH BN

The 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. MacKereth, M.C.) was less fortunate in its attempts to probe the German intentions soon after it had taken over for the first time a sector of the line near Voormezeele. On 9th September two strong patrols of "X" Company, each consisting of an officer and twenty other ranks, made unsuccessful efforts to obtain identifications and themselves lost three men missing, of whom one was wounded. Patrols made further endeavours to take prisoners on the following day but without result, one party coming under heavy machine-gun fire from the Spoil Bank east of Voormezeele, which had figured so largely in the 10th Battalion's gallant fight at The Bluff in February, 1916. On 11th September three patrols went out with the same object. One of them, under Second-Lieutenant J. Cooke, penetrated as far as

Blauwe Poort Farm, half a mile south of Zillebeke Lake, and threw bombs at its garrison without however being able to take any prisoners.

2ND/5TH BN. The 2nd/5th Battalion (Major J. H. Evans, M.C., in temporary command) was not left in undisturbed possession of the ground which it had won at Givenchy by steady "nibbling" at the end of August and the beginning of September, and it had to submit to several bombing attacks, especially at Canteleux Alley. At 2 p.m. on 14th September two companies attacked the enemy in Canteleux Trench. The Germans put up a strong resistance, but blocks were established well within their lines. Company Serjeant-Major A. Bullock, who had volunteered to take part in the operation, was in command of one party and himself bombed a line of dug-outs single-handed, capturing ten Germans and killing others. He was wounded but refused to leave the line and insisted on carrying on after having his wounds roughly dressed in the forward position. Later, the Germans counter-attacked but, after fighting which lasted for several hours and cost the battalion some ground, they were driven back by Lewis-gun fire. Bullock was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his gallantry; Serjeant J. Chadwick and Lance-Corporals H. J. Birch, W. Bowman, A. E. Harris and P. Thomas received the Military Medal for their share in the affair.

18TH BN. A clear indication of the enemy's intention to retire was afforded when the 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jewels, D.S.O., M.C.) took part in an operation by which the 35th Division, with only a light artillery barrage, advanced south-east of Ypres to an average depth of one thousand yards. Much of its success was due to the patrolling carried out beforehand by day and by night by Second-Lieutenant D. D. Rutherford, who penetrated far into the enemy's lines, to equally good patrol work by Second-Lieutenant J. J. Rewcastle and to the cutting of gaps in the German wire before zero by Second-Lieutenant R. S. Bauld, M.C. The battalion crossed the Ypres–Comines Canal near the Spoil Bank shortly after 10.30 a.m. on 16th September. The left platoon, commanded by Bauld, had the task of covering the left flank; it was faced by some untouched wire south of Blauwe Poort Farm, but soon cut gaps in it; and shortly after it rushed two German posts before their machine guns could be brought into action, a third from which only a few shots were fired being captured shortly afterwards. A little farther to the south, the occupants of La Chapelle Farm held up the advance temporarily with machine-gun fire and bombs; but Rutherford, to whom this objective had been allotted, handled his platoon with such skill and coolness that he surrounded the post and captured it with fifteen prisoners and a machine gun. Rewcastle, who had kept his platoon close behind the barrage without losing a single man, now tried to exploit this success. He led his men some six hundred yards farther into the German lines, but found no further signs of the enemy. Rutherford also patrolled a great distance forward, but

with the same result. A position was consolidated to the south of Zillebeke, the battalion having advanced about 1,500 yards on a front of 2,000 yards and captured nearly thirty prisoners, with one heavy and one light machine gun. The casualties were slight, though consolidation was hampered by shelling during which Bauld walked from post to post encouraging his men in their work. The honours awarded for this action included :—

Bar to Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant R. S. Bauld, M.C.

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant J. J. Rewcastle. Second-Lieutenant D. D. Rutherford.

Military Medal

Serjeant T. Hubbard. Lance-Serjeant R. W. Temple.
Lance-Serjeant W. J. Woodhall. Corporal J. Airey.
Private E. E. Collishaw. Private G. Hoare.
Private W. J. Roberts.

The Hindenburg Line Again

16th Battalion

Nearly eighteen months after its pursuit of the Germans to the Hindenburg Line in the spring of 1917, the 16th Battalion (Major A. G. Macdonald, D.S.O., in temporary command) found itself once more fighting at Holnon Wood, four miles west-north-west of St. Quentin. As before, the Germans were fighting rear-guard actions to keep the Allies away from the Hindenburg Line till it had been securely occupied. But whereas, before, the retreat of the Germans had been voluntary, unhurried and well controlled, on this occasion it was the result of 8th August, the "Black Day," and the morale of the troops was by no means what it had been. Late on 10th September the 16th Battalion took over a sector of the line east of Villévêque. On the following day it took Attilly and advanced to the western edge of Holnon Wood and Hill 135 within it. On the 12th the advance was continued to the eastern edge of the wood, in spite of heavy shelling of the latter. Private W. Fowler, whose gallantry as a runner had been conspicuous in this as in previous operations, received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for further good work under fire on this occasion and for his earlier services. 16TH BN.

"HINDENBURG LINE," "ÉPÉHY"

10th Battalion

The British troops were now approaching what was obviously to be a tough nut to crack—namely, the formidable Hindenburg Line. But before it could be attacked, its outer defences had to be carried. It has been told how the 10th Battalion attempted to capture Heather Trench, near Gouzeaucourt, part of those defences, 10TH BN.

on 9th September. The same unit (Major T. B. Forwood, Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry, in temporary command) repeated the attempt on 18th September, this time successfully. It attacked at 5.20 a.m. that morning, with all its four companies in line, under a barrage so intense that "C" Company and part of "B" had to be withdrawn fifty yards in rear of Heather Support trench, the starting line, so that it might clear them. The companies reached their objectives between 5.30 and 5.40 a.m. "D" Company on the right arrived before the battalion on its right and met with some opposition from a machine gun and some bombers concealed in Heather Trench. These were, however, quickly overcome by a platoon which worked down the trench and established touch with the neighbouring unit by 5.40 a.m. The other companies met with little resistance, though they were hampered by interningling on the part of the unit on the left, which had partly lost direction. During this stage of the operation all the officers of "B" Company became casualties and Company Serjeant-Major H. Ashton took command of it until an officer could be sent from elsewhere. On reaching the objective each company quickly pushed forward a platoon to deal with any Germans who might be lurking in shell-holes in front, so as to protect the 50th Infantry Brigade as it passed through at about 5.50 a.m. to attack a further objective. The battalion could not accurately count its prizes, but estimated them at 100 prisoners, 8 heavy and 14 light machine guns, 2 trench mortars and 3 anti-tank rifles. It had not, however, finished its activities for the day; for the division on the left did not succeed in taking its second objective and the left flank of the successful 50th Brigade was exposed. At about 12.30 p.m., therefore, the battalion was ordered to form a defensive flank in positions which proved to be under direct observation from the enemy, with the result that considerable artillery and machine-gun fire was experienced and that touch could not be established with the unit on the right. The positions were, however, maintained throughout the day. On the next two days, 19th and 20th, companies relieved units of the division on the left. On 21st further adjustments were carried out and two patrols, sent out to see whether the enemy was still in position or had retired, found that he was not disposed to go without further pressure. The whole battalion was relieved on 23rd September. Throughout this period, Second-Lieutenant H. W. Smith performed most valuable work as signalling officer in maintaining communications under heavy fire and sending back useful reports under very adverse conditions. He was awarded the Military Cross. Other decorations received were :—

Bar to Military Medal

Serjeant W. Gledhill, M.M.

Military Medal

Serjeant E. C. Alcock. Serjeant W. L. Webb.

Private A. Tomlinson.

INTO THE HINDENBURG LINE

"HINDENBURG LINE," "CANAL DU NORD"

1st/5th, 1st/7th and 1st/8th Battalions

The British Army was now in a position to attack the Hindenburg Line, the strongest defences ever prepared up till then. That it was not impregnable had been proved by the 29th and other Divisions on 20th November, 1917. But the advance of the Germans in March, 1918, had enabled them to reoccupy it in September, 1918, as they originally had done; and they looked forward to holding up any British attack on it, mistakenly as it turned out. To the 42nd Division was entrusted on 27th September, 1918, the task of penetrating the Hindenburg Line to a depth of two miles to the east of Trescault, crossing two steep-sided ridges and having as its final objective ("Blue Line") a third spur, known as "Highland Ridge," which points in a north-easterly direction at Marcoing and lies above the cleft of the Couillet Valley. Patrols were to be sent across the latter to "Welsh Ridge," a spur running parallel to "Highland Ridge." The 125th Infantry Brigade was to attack on the right, with the 1st/7th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brewis, D.S.O.) on the right and the 1st/8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. S. MacLeod) on the left. As it would have been impossible for the 42nd Division to cross the lower ends of the spurs running north from Beaucamp until the high ground at that place and at Flesquières to the north had been captured, the attack of the Lancashire Fusiliers was timed to start about two and a half hours after that of the division on their outer flank. "A" Company (Captain W. J. O'Bryen, M.C.) of the 1st/7th moved forward at 8.2 a.m., and after hard fighting gained its objective. At 8.38 a.m. "B" Company (Captain E. C. Sington) passed through them and advanced towards the second objective. Unfortunately, the division on the right had not been able to take the vital high ground at Beaucamp, whence came heavy machine-gun fire which held up the whole of the 42nd Division for some time. "C" Company (Major R. H. Cade) came up to help "B," but could make no progress. The Germans seized the opportunity to counter-attack, bombing down a communication trench known as Beaucamp Support. They were driven off, largely thanks to the pluck of Private J. F. Evans, who mounted his Lewis gun on the parapet and inflicted heavy casualties on them. Shortly before noon, "C" Company had to withdraw to escape a barrage put down by the 4·5-inch howitzers in an endeavour to destroy the nests of obstructing machine guns. A tank was seen to be trying to attack these nests just north of Beaucamp, but it was put out of action. At about 1 p.m. "C" Company tried again to reach its objective but, after making some progress, was once more held up by heavy fire from the direction of Beaucamp and from near the tank. They endeavoured to outflank the latter obstacle but without success. On the other hand, they frustrated an attempt made by the enemy to work round their right flank; and at the end of the day the

1ST/7TH BN.

battalion was still in possession of its first objective and of 120 prisoners. Serjeant T. W. Bann did magnificent work on this occasion. When all the men of one of his Lewis-gun sections were knocked out, he seized the gun and fired it himself. He then collected enough men to form a section and continued the attack. Later in the day his company commander became a casualty; whereupon he took control and led the men to their objective. Private J. Tempest, M.M., also distinguished himself by remaining alone in a shell-hole in front of his company and directing the fire of his Lewis-gun section on to German machine guns and snipers, in spite of the fact that this inevitably drew fire on himself, as was indeed his intention.

1st/8th Bn.

In the meanwhile the 1st/8th had met with much the same experiences on the left, though its casualties had been heavier. The barrage had missed the first objective and the wire in front of it was uncut, with the result that the leading waves were faced by devastating machine-gun fire not only from Beaucamp on the right, as in the case of the 1st/7th, but also from their own objective immediately in front. Within a few minutes all the officers of "C" Company (Captain A. Parke, M.C.) were killed or wounded and only one officer remained in "A" Company (Captain J. A. McCulloch). As usual, the juniors stepped unhesitatingly into the breach. Company Serjeant-Major J. Shackleton reorganized his company in spite of the heavy fire and, leading it forward, became its mainstay for the rest of the day. Serjeant L. R. Wild, a man of many parts who held a medal for life-saving, did the same for his men, later rushing a machine-gun post with five men, killing the crew and capturing the gun. Private J. Kilgour, with the help of Private J. Emmett, managed to bomb his way to some of the guns in front and to put them out of action, killing or wounding the crews and taking ten prisoners. As a result of these splendid acts of initiative and in spite of the loss of 9 officers and 132 other ranks in half an hour, the battalion seized its first objective. The second objective presented fewer difficulties and was taken in the early afternoon with the help of a platoon of the 1st/5th under Second-Lieutenant R. Stirrup which captured a machine-gun post. Patrols were sent forward; and one platoon of "A" Company of the 1st/8th succeeded in reaching the third objective, to the west of Highland Ridge. It had, however, to be withdrawn to avoid being hit by the barrage which has been previously mentioned. The battalion took about two hundred prisoners during the day.

It had been intended to organize a further attack for the possession of Highland Ridge at 6.30 p.m. on 27th September; but it was postponed, first to 1.30 a.m. and then to 2.30 a.m. on 28th, when "D" Company (Captain S. D. Harrison, M.C.) of the 1st/8th and "D" Company (Captain W. Kelly) of the 1st/7th attacked in the half light of an early dawn, helped by a half moon in a cloudless sky. Second-Lieutenant F. Wood, of the 1st/7th, led his men under heavy machine-gun fire with great gallantry, frequently exposing himself

in order to get the line forward in places where it had been held up. In a little over half an hour the second objective, on Argyle Ridge, had been taken with over two hundred prisoners. A curious incident occurred at about this time. Corporal F. Dulhanty, M.M., who had shown great gallantry as a runner on the 27th, was carrying a message during this night attack when he came upon a party of fifty Germans, who were all fully armed. Without a moment's hesitation, he attacked them single-handed and forced them to surrender. At 3.15 a.m. the 1st/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Castle, M.C.) which had hitherto been in support, passed through under a creeping barrage with "A" Company (Captain R. E. Combe, M.C.) on the right and "D" Company (Lieutenant L. A. Caldwell) on the left. "D" Company was very weak and was extended over a wide front; but Caldwell had such a good grasp of the situation and of his men's confidence that he led them to take their objective very rapidly with 100 prisoners, 26 machine guns and a 77-millimetre gun. "A" Company was equally successful, and at 4.50 a.m. "B" (Second-Lieutenant J. E. Watkins) and "C" (Lieutenant B. R. Hawksey) Companies went through and by midday had reached the Division's final objective on Highland Ridge, with a "bag" of a further 200 prisoners against losses of 6 killed and 29 wounded, though Hawksey, whose leadership had been splendid, was missing and was subsequently reported to have been killed. The 1st/5th pushed forward patrols and were joined on Highland Ridge by the 1st/8th, two of whose companies passed through at 1 p.m. and seized another 2,000 yards of ground. Both battalions were able to send patrols across the Couillet Valley to establish themselves on Welsh Ridge beyond it, Second-Lieutenant A. R. G. Blake of the 1st/8th doing especially good work and capturing two field guns. 1ST/5TH BN.

It had been a glorious engagement for the Territorial battalions. They had had fierce fighting and heavy casualties; but they had punched a hole in the redoubtable Hindenburg Line and taken heavy toll of its defenders, and they knew that they now had the enemy "on the run." The following honours were awarded for 27th and 28th September:—

1ST/5TH BATTALION

Military Cross

Lieutenant L. A. Caldwell.

1ST/7TH BATTALION

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant F. Wood.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Serjeant T. W. Bann. Corporal F. Dulhanty, M.M.
Private J. F. Evans. Private J. Tempest.

Bar to Military Medal

Corporal B. Taylor, M.M.

Military Medal

Lance-Serjeant A. Stretch. Private F. Eddy.

1ST/8TH BATTALION

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major J. Shackleton. Serjeant L. R. Wild.
Private J. Kilgour.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major W. Rule. Serjeant J. Birmingham.
Lance-Corporal J. H. Hargreaves. Private J. Emmett.
Private L. J. Orchard.

THROUGH THE HINDENBURG LINE

The successes gained by the 42nd Division and other troops on 27th and 28th September were exploited and a bridgehead over the Canal de L'Escaut was established at Marcoing, three miles south-south-west of Cambrai. The line of the canal was regarded by the Germans as one of the most valuable natural obstacles in the defences constituting the Hindenburg Line, and they made very determined efforts to prevent the British from extending their bridgehead. This had been foreseen and the next stage in the operations was planned to turn the canal by crossing it farther south where it ran through two tunnels, at Le Tronquoy and Bellicourt. Long stretches of the canal had, however, to be crossed in the open and, when this phase of the battle began on 29th September, the 46th (North Midland) Division achieved immortal fame by its resource and gallantry in crossing the canal at Bellenglise, between the two tunnels. It was followed by the 15th (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. R. G. Alban, D.S.O.) and the 16th (Lieutenant-Colonel A. Stone, D.S.O.) Battalions. At 8 a.m. on 30th September the 15th attacked the village of Joncourt with the support of an artillery barrage and several tanks. The Australians on the left had been held up by heavy machine-gun fire from the west and south of the village and were therefore unable to secure the key positions which would have enabled the 15th to advance. The battalion nevertheless made repeated and determined efforts to enter the village, but without success. Captain P. E. Townend, although wounded early in the attack, on seeing his leading platoon held up, advanced over very exposed ground to it, but found it had suffered such heavy casualties that it no longer had any offensive value. He promptly went back and brought up some supports. While he was leading them forward he was again hit twice in the leg and was unable to walk. Even this did not deter him, for he crawled back to his company headquarters, organized his reserve and handed over his company correctly to the next senior before he would allow himself to be carried down to the regimental aid post. The day had not, however, been in vain, for the battalion succeeded in establishing itself on the outskirts of the village, in touch with the units on its flanks, and inflicted many casualties on the enemy. Very valuable work in reorganizing the unit was done by its Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Alban. It had, moreover, so shaken the Germans that, when the battalion renewed its attack at 8.30 a.m. on 1st October, after a most useful recon-

15TH AND 16TH BNS

naissance by Major L. C. Mandleberg, M.C., it was able to clear the village from the south and establish a line to the east of it. During the afternoon the 2nd Manchester Regiment, which had attacked with great gallantry and a considerable measure of success, suffered such severe losses in its right company that it was compelled to ask for the help of a company of the 15th. Mandleberg distinguished himself throughout the fighting at Joncourt, taking up supports when needed ; and at a later stage, when a German counter-attack was developing, he took command of the firing line and organized a steady and deadly volume of fire which contributed to the break-up of the attack.

The advance had now reached the Fonsomme Line which lay, incompletely wired, about three miles behind the main Hindenburg Line and was the last organized system of defences to be broken before open country was reached and open warfare could, after four years, be resumed. It had considerable natural strength and was stubbornly defended when it was attacked on 2nd October. The 16th Battalion's role in this operation was to help in the capture of Ramicourt, which lay immediately east of the Fonsomme Line. It formed up east of Joncourt and, advancing under a barrage, managed to cross the Fonsomme Line. But the troops on the left had been unable to progress or to overcome some German machine guns well placed to fire at the 16th Battalion. Serious casualties soon occurred. One company lost all its officers, whereupon Company Serjeant-Major F. Capon took command of it and, when he could go no farther, organized the defence of an advanced and very exposed position and encouraged the men. In another company, Second-Lieutenant C. H. J. Hulton was the only officer left. When his company was likewise held up by the machine-gun fire, he went round the whole of his line, reorganizing it and putting heart into his men. The position was for some time very obscure to those at headquarters. Lieutenant-Colonel Stone, the Commanding Officer, was killed at an early stage ; Major D. Lindsay was wounded on his way up to take command ; and eventually Major P. E. Robathan came up from the transport lines and assumed command. In the meanwhile Lieutenant J. W. Lewis had gone forward from battalion headquarters to find out how things really stood. He made his way to the front and back through very heavy fire and brought back clear and valuable information, on the strength of which the brigadier ordered a withdrawal to the Fonsomme Line. This movement was successfully carried out, thanks largely to the skill of Hulton, who afterwards made several reconnaissances in front of the line and ascertained much useful information as to the enemy's dispositions. Capon also went out in front of the new line on several occasions with parties of men and rescued wounded under heavy rifle and machine-gun fire. Another who did gallant work that day was Second-Lieutenant H. Whitehead, who led his platoon with great skill, having the previous night successfully led the carrying party with the battalion's rations along

approaches which were under constant and heavy shell and machine-gun fire. The battalion had lost heavily in all ranks, but it had the satisfaction of knowing that, although it had not been able to take Ramicourt, it had established a firm hold on the Fonsomme Line and thus provided a good starting line for an attack into the open. The 15th and 16th Battalions were withdrawn early on 3rd October. The decorations awarded for the operations at Joncourt and Ramicourt were :—

Bar to Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. R. G. Alban, D.S.O., 15th.

Distinguished Service Order

Major L. C. Mandleberg, M.C., 15th.

Military Cross

Captain P. E. Townend, 15th.
Second-Lieutenant C. H. J. Hulton, 16th.
Lieutenant J. W. Lewis, 16th.
Second-Lieutenant H. Whitehead, 16th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Company Serjeant-Major F. Capon, 16th.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major H. Mahon, 15th.
Serjeant J. W. Crinigan, 15th.
Serjeant J. Grundy, 15th.
Serjeant F. Thompson, 15th.
Serjeant H. C. Meddings, 16th.
Private J. Ashworth, 15th.
Private H. C. Green, 16th.
Private F. Orme, 16th.
Company Quartermaster-Serjeant G. Dunning, 16th.
Serjeant A. Gastall, 16th.
Serjeant W. H. Jones, 16th.
Corporal A. E. Hall, 16th.
Private E. Boston, 15th.
Private J. Guile, 15th.
Private J. Slade, 16th.
Private W. Taylor, 15th.

A Fourth Battle of Ypres

"YPRES, 1918"

1st, 17th, 18th and 23rd Battalions

The Allies had by now so completely gained the initiative that they could choose the time and place of their blows with little risk of interference from the enemy. The principle which they adopted was not to press any attack when its initial momentum had been lost but to launch a fresh attack elsewhere when the enemy's reserves had been drawn towards the scene of the previous operation. Eventually, so far had the morale of the enemy declined that he was withdrawing rapidly in many places and the Allies had to set almost the whole of their forces in motion to follow him. Even so, the German retirement was not a rout and he fought what amounted to rear-guard actions very stubbornly on suitable positions.

While the operations which have just been described were finally destroying the reputation of the Hindenburg Line for impregnability, the fourth, last and most decisive Battle of Ypres had been begun in the north with the object of seizing the crossings of the River Lys and ultimately dislodging the Germans from the Belgian coast. The main attack in this quarter was launched on 28th September,

but the 23rd Battalion (Major J. P. M. Ingham, D.S.O., Royal Munster Fusiliers, in temporary command) took part in a preliminary operation on the previous day in order to make good the western bank of the River Lys. At 5.45 a.m. on 27th September it left its position on the northern outskirts of Pont de Nieppe and advanced towards the river between the Bailleul–Armentières road and the bend in the river at the Belgian frontier. Considerable opposition was met and one company was held up by a party of Germans holding a farm which was surrounded by a moat. Private W. Parkinson swam the moat in the teeth of strong opposition and cleared the farm. The advance was thus enabled to continue and the battalion reached its objective except on the extreme right. But its position proved to be untenable owing to the heavy enfilade fire to which it was subjected and, later in the day, it was ordered to withdraw and to establish posts to the north-east and east of Pont de Nieppe, which was successfully done. Private W. Parkinson, who was wounded in the later stages of the operation, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and Private L. B. Ross the Military Medal. 23RD BN.

The 1st Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Modera, D.S.O., M.C.) had the distinction of being one of the two battalions which led the main attack in the 29th Division. It took over the front of the 86th Infantry Brigade close to the crossing of the Ypres–Roulers railway and the Ypres–Menin road by 10 p.m. on 27th September, sharing a headquarters with the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers in a cutting. A fire broke out there soon after the arrival of the Lancashire Fusiliers (*post hoc* is not necessarily *propter hoc*!), in which Lieutenant-Colonel Modera's raincoat was burnt, a grievous loss during the drenching rain which came down after the first day of the attack. The battalion's task on 28th September was to capture the 86th Brigade's first objective ("Red Line"), which ran north and south about three-quarters of a mile east of Hooge and just short of the bend in the Ypres-Menin road. By 5 a.m. the unit was deployed in depth, with "A" Company (Captain C. Wedgwood) on the right and "D" Company (Captain V. H. Kempson) on the left in front, "B" (Captain P. D. W. Dunn) being in support of "A" and "C" (Captain H. Q. Rangecroft, M.C.) in support of "D." Zero was at 5.30 a.m.; and the advance took place under a barrage, part of which fell short and inflicted the majority of the day's casualties as the troops were so eager to get forward that they followed the barrage rather too closely in some cases. Lieutenant-Colonel Modera was wounded in the face and hand by a smoke shell which burst between him and Kempson; both, however, remained at duty though Kempson had to leave the line on the 30th. The objective was soon taken, with about 120 prisoners and a number of machine guns of various types, though not without fighting, as was shown by the finding of a mortally wounded serjeant of the battalion surrounded by five dead and bayoneted Germans. As soon as the "Red Line" had been seized, other units passed through and reached a line beyond Gheluvelt. 1ST BN.

The battalion reorganized and concentrated near Fort Garry, a short distance to the east of the bend in the main road, with the exception of "C" Company, which moved forward behind the left support company, and under the orders of the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, so as to afford protection to its left flank. Early on 29th September the battalion advanced in echelon behind the left flank of that unit. It was not called upon to fight on this day and reached a line running south-east from Becelaere without incident. Rain began to fall in the evening and continued throughout the night. It was coming down in torrents when the battalion resumed its advance at 7.30 a.m. on 30th September, with the battalion snipers under Second-Lieutenant L. A. Manly thrown out to protect the left flank and to keep touch with the neighbouring division. By 9.30 a.m. the battalion had reached the high ground at Molenhoek, a mile and a half north-west of Gheluwe. After a pause, during which it was ascertained that the Germans were holding that village and the farms north of it, an attack was launched at 11 a.m. with "D" Company (now commanded by Lieutenant J. C. B. Harris) on the right supported by "C," and "B" on the left supported by "A." Scouts led the way, followed by Lewis-gun teams. Heavy machine-gun fire was encountered from various parts of the line held by the enemy. Harris handled his company with great skill and organized the seizing of several farms and "pill-boxes" occupied by the enemy. Dunn also displayed great skill and moved about under heavy fire with complete disregard of danger, ensuring that all parts of his company did what was required of them and sending back much-needed information. By 2 p.m. a position had been established facing south-east astride the two roads leading from Terhand to Gheluwe. The advance was then continued, though still in the face of resistance. At 4 p.m. opposition was encountered from a farm about a mile north of Gheluwe. Machine guns were brought up to engage it, while the battalion "artillery," consisting of the rifle grenadiers of all platoons concentrated into one body, was sent round under Regimental Serjeant-Major W. Lund, D.C.M., to deal with it from the south. This fire was too much for the garrison and "D" Company was able to occupy it, finding a wounded German and two machine guns from which the locks had been removed. During this incident, Serjeant-Major Lund was killed—a great loss to the battalion, by whom he was held in great respect and affection. "D" Company had suffered numerous casualties and Rangecroft was ordered to take up a platoon of "C" Company to its help. At 6 p.m. this platoon was led by him to outflank a "pill-box" a short distance to the east of the farm taken by "D" Company. Under cover of Lewis-gun fire, he rushed the post, capturing an officer and thirteen other ranks, without the loss of a man from his platoon. With the enemy's attention distracted by this party, Harris with some men of "D" Company was able to work round the other flank of the post, arriving in it almost at the same time as Rangecroft. Another farm, a short distance farther east, was taken; but the machine-gun fire

was becoming so heavy that it was obviously impossible to attempt any further progress without the virtual certainty of unnecessary casualties. Amongst those who had distinguished themselves in the capture of farms this day was Corporal H. Chapman, who took command of his platoon when its serjeant commander was wounded and materially contributed to his company's success by his skilful action at four farms defended by machine guns and snipers. "B" Company on the left had kept level with "D" and reached a line just beyond the easternmost of the two roads from Terhand to Gheluwe. Second-Lieutenant F. Wood and his platoon tried to reach the German light railway a mile farther east, but they suffered heavy casualties and he himself was killed. By the end of the day the battalion held a position to the north-north-east of Gheluwe, within a short distance of the road leading thence to Dadizeele. It rained all day until nearly 6 p.m.

Resistance was obviously stiffening and it was evident that the British were approaching a line on which the Germans intended to stand. In consequence, very little progress could be made on 1st October. On the right, no advance could be made owing to heavy machine-gun fire from Gheluwe and some trenches to the north of it. On the other flank, "A" Company, passing through "B" at dawn, succeeded in fighting its way forward about four hundred yards, with its flank just beyond the Gheluwe–Dadizeele road. Wedgwood was conspicuous for his skill, driving the enemy out of three strongholds and inflicting many casualties without any loss to his company, which in fact suffered only sixteen casualties throughout the four days of fighting. In his company was Private A. Simpson, who during this day's operations went out alone to discover the exact position of a German machine gun which was firing at his platoon. He found the offending "pill-box," crawled round to its flank, shot its two sentries, thoroughly reconnoitred the position and on his way back shot a sniper who had also been annoying his platoon.

The battalion, which had been handled throughout with the utmost coolness and the soundest judgement by its Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Modera, was relieved the same night and moved to some "pill-boxes" and shelters near Kruiseecke, a mile and a half south-east of Gheluvelt. Its captures during these operations had been 3 officers, 15 other ranks and 7 machine guns. Its losses had been 2 officers and 14 other ranks killed, 5 officers and 104 other ranks wounded, and 6 men missing. Its rewards included :—

Bar to Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Modera, D.S.O., M.C.

Bar to Military Cross

Captain H. Q. Rangecroft, M.C. Captain C. Wedgwood, M.C.

Military Cross

Captain P. D. W. Dunn. Lieutenant J. C. B. Harris.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Corporal H. Chapman. Private A. Simpson.

Bar to Military Medal

Serjeant T. Massey, M.M. Lance-Corporal M. Bramley, M.M.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major E. Reynolds.
Lance-Corporal J. Charnley.
Private G. H. Ackrel.
Private T. Carter.
Private H. Howarth.
Private A. E. Moorhouse.
Private J. Roe.
Serjeant J. Bailey.
Lance-Corporal J. R. Crooks.
Private M. Armistead.
Private W. Forrester.
Private D. Jones.
Private A. Pomfret.
Private R. Walsh.
Private F. W. Watson.

The achievements and difficulties of the 29th Division and of the 1st Battalion had their reactions on those of the 35th Division, which included the 17th and 18th Battalions and which fought on the right of the 29th Division, between the Ypres Comines Canal
18TH BN. and the Menin road. Within its brigade, the 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jewels, D.S.O., M.C.) led the attack on 28th September with the Klein Zillebeke ridge as its first objective. An accurate barrage opened at 5.25 a.m. ; and the battalion, which had moved up to its assembly positions between 9.30 p.m. and 3 a.m., advanced at 5.30 a.m. in drenching rain. Thanks to gallantry and initiative such as that shown by Second-Lieutenant P. Merrick, who rushed two machine guns and completely knocked them out, the intermediate objective of the famous Hill 60 and "the Caterpillar" (a spoil bank on the other side of the Ypres-Comines canal from the railway) was taken at 6.35 a.m. The troops then pushed on towards Klein Zillebeke and encountered more opposition. But Second-Lieutenant R. S. Bauld, M.C., led his men so splendidly that he seemed to take machine guns in his stride. Second-Lieutenant J. J. Rewcastle, M.C., again distinguished himself by personally leading an attack on three German machine guns which he captured with their teams. A little later he entered a dug-out and shot the nearest man, whereupon the remaining occupants, to the number of forty, decided to "go quietly." Second-Lieutenant J. E. Coutts led his men to a flank and enfiladed a machine gun which was delaying the advance, capturing or killing the crew. He was badly wounded but nevertheless pressed forward with his platoon to the objective, clearing dug-outs and dislodging the enemy as he went. The advance of the battalion's right wing was helped by Merrick, who cleared away a machine gun and its team which had been firing heavily on the attackers. By 8.20 a.m. the battalion was firmly established on its final objective. Indeed, Bauld pushed well forward of it, rushed a "pill-box," capturing its two machine guns and killing its garrison. Second-Lieutenant G. S. Cormack, who had taken command of his company early in the day when his captain was hit, also led his men well beyond the objective, rushing two "pill-boxes" under heavy machine-gun fire, killing or capturing the occupants and taking their guns. Patrols were pushed forward towards Jehovah Trench. Once again machine guns were encountered. But Second-Lieutenant M. Arnold rushed one of them with his platoon and enabled the rest of

the line to move forward. He then pushed forward again about one thousand yards towards three German field guns, whose crews showed every intention of defending them to the last. But Arnold, with the help of Rewcastle, soon disposed of their opposition, killing or capturing them all. Second-Lieutenant J. Sillitoe, M.M., also behaved with great gallantry during the attack, rushing and capturing a machine gun in the first phase and co-operating splendidly in the capture of the battery. Another who was instrumental in silencing two machine guns was Serjeant R. W. Temple, M.M., who handled his platoon with great ability. And, as so often happened, the battalion chaplain, the Reverend J. Sheridan, showed the most gallant devotion to duty: as soon as the Hill 60 line had been reached, he was one of the very first to arrive and to help with the evacuation of wounded from the most forward positions. He was nobly supported by Second-Lieutenant G. Fyfe, who was taken away from his normal duties with the 104th Trench Mortar Battery to command a party of stretcher-bearers and worked continuously under shell fire at his errand of mercy. By 11.30 a.m. a firm line of posts had been established about a thousand yards to the south-east of Klein Zillebeke. The battalion's prizes included 200 prisoners, amongst whom was a regimental commander, 13 field guns, more machine guns than could be counted and a considerable quantity of maps and documents. The casualties were comparatively light at 4 officers and 104 other ranks.

17TH BN.

In the meanwhile the 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. Jones, M.C., Durham Light Infantry) had been moving forward with a view to passing through the 18th Battalion and advancing to Zandvoorde. At 9.40 a.m. the 17th crossed the Klein Zillebeke position in attack formation, with "Z" Company (Captain R. S. Heape, M.C.) at the "point" of the diamond, "X" (Captain L. Kitchin) on the right, "Y" (Lieutenant J. A. Shearston) on the left and "W" (Captain H. G. Leaver, M.C.) in rear, to take Jehovah Trench, which the battalion's patrols were already exploring. It was found to be occupied, but the enemy soon withdrew and the trench changed hands before 11.30 a.m. "Y" and "Z" Companies pushed forward strong reconnaissance parties frontally towards Zandvoorde, but they were greeted with such heavy machine-gun fire from the Basservillebeek valley and from the Zandvoorde ridge that Lieutenant-Colonel Jones decided that a frontal attack would prove much too costly and that an assault from a flank would have greater prospects of success. In spite of heavy machine-gun fire at close range, Lieutenant-Colonel Jones carried out a personal reconnaissance and, having learnt that the brigade on the left had found a "soft spot," he led the battalion to the north and launched an attack southward, with "W" Company leading, "Y" and "Z" close behind and "X" engaging the enemy with fire. The enemy were evidently taken by surprise and most did not await the final assault, though the crew of an anti-aircraft machine gun showed fight until a shower of rifle grenades despatched by a platoon of

"W" Company induced them to withdraw in haste. By 4 p.m. a good part of the Zandvoorde ridge was in the battalion's possession and the position was soon consolidated, with outposts on the forward slopes facing south-east, though the village itself had not been taken. The day's fighting had been marked by great endurance on the part of all ranks and by much individual bravery. Second-Lieutenant F. Aspden in particular displayed marked ability and resource and by his courage and good leadership helped greatly towards the success of the whole operation. Second-Lieutenant R. C. R. Robinson's platoon became separated from the rest of its company during the attack on Zandvoorde and came across a German "pill-box." Quite undaunted, he organized an independent attack on this obstruction, rushed the enemy and captured the "pill-box."

The battalion's hold on the Zandvoorde ridge was, however, not complete; and at 6.30 p.m. the enemy attempted a counter-attack from the direction of Tenbrielen but was repulsed by rifle and Lewis-gun fire. During the night of 28th/29th September strong reconnoitring patrols were sent forward without, however, meeting with the enemy. But at dawn the Germans showed their presence by shelling the 17th Battalion's line on Zandvoorde ridge and by opening machine-gun fire from the outskirts of Zandvoorde village. The enemy soon had other things to think about; for at 2 p.m. another brigade passed through the forward positions and by nightfall on 29th September had carried the line forward to Tenbrielen. The same brigade continued the advance early on 30th September, the 17th and 18th Battalions moving forward behind it. At 2 p.m. the two battalions were ordered to take part in an attack towards the Wervicq–Menin road, the 18th Battalion leading with the 19th Durham Light Infantry, the 17th Battalion being in support. The resistance which the 1st Battalion had met on this day was equally felt by the 18th Battalion, which encountered fierce opposition at America Cabaret, a mile and a half north of Wervicq. Little progress was possible and a halt had to be made about five hundred yards east of the Wervicq–Becelaere road. Rewcastle carried out a valuable reconnaissance and later led his platoon forward with great ability. Bauld, Arnold, Cormack and Sillitoe again distinguished themselves by the pressure they quickly exerted on any body of Germans they met; and Sheridan, the chaplain, was frequently in exposed positions, caring for the wounded and helping their evacuation. The attack was resumed at dawn on 1st October, but little progress could be made. On the evening of that day the 17th Battalion, which had been in support, relieved the 19th Durham Light Infantry in the line east of America Cabaret. During the night, Bauld rushed forward with a party of about thirty men and occupied a "pill-box" behind the German lines, to which he clung tenaciously until relieved forty-eight hours later.

17TH AND 18TH BNS.

At 7 a.m. on 2nd October "X" Company of the 17th Battalion attacked the ridge at Reeke, a hamlet 1,200 yards north-east of

Wervicq after half an hour's bombardment by four batteries. But their objective was part of a well-prepared position and could not be reached by local attacks. Machine-gun fire was so heavy that practically no progress could be made, in spite of an attempt by "W" Company to find on the left a flank which could be turned. On the evening of the 2nd the two battalions were relieved and moved back to the neighbourhood of Zillebeke. The 18th marched through Ypres with its band playing and claimed that this was the first occasion on which a band had been heard in Ypres since 1914.

The casualties during this period of four days' fighting had been heavy, but the troops had behaved magnificently. In addition to the acts of individual gallantry already quoted, mention must be made of a devoted signaller of the 17th Battalion, Private B. Rees, M.M., who went out time after time under heavy fire, repairing the lines as soon as they were broken. It was almost entirely due to his energy that touch was maintained throughout the operations between the battalion and two brigade headquarters. Amongst the decorations awarded for this action were the following:—

Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel J. Jones, M.C., 17th. Lieutenant R. S. Bauld, M.C., 18th.

Bar to Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant J. J. Rewcastle, M.C., 18th.

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant M. Arnold, 18th.
Second-Lieutenant F. Aspden, 17th.
Second-Lieutenant J. E. Coutts, 18th.
Second-Lieutenant G. S. Cormack, 18th.
Second-Lieutenant G. Fyfe, 18th.
Second-Lieutenant P. Merrick, 18th.
Second-Lieutenant R. C. R. Robinson, 17th.
The Reverend J. Sheridan, 18th.
Second-Lieutenant J. Sillitoe, M.M., 18th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Private B. Rees, M.M., 17th. Serjeant R. W. Temple, M.M., 18th.

Bar to Military Medal

Serjeant J. K. Craig, M.M., 18th. Serjeant J. Lord, M.M., 17th.
Private E. E. Collishaw, M.M., 18th.

Military Medal

Serjeant A. E. Barrett, 18th.
Serjeant R. Coverdale, 18th.
Serjeant E. Seddon, 17th.
Lance-Serjeant R. Hartill, 17th.
Corporal C. P. Howitt, 17th.
Lance-Corporal C. Holmes, 17th.
Lance-Corporal J. Rigby, 17th.
Private W. Carradus, 17th.
Private F. Holland, 17th.
Private P. Quinn, 18th.
Private A. Ward, 18th.
Serjeant T. Collins, 18th.
Serjeant W. Lowe, 18th.
Serjeant S. Talbot, 18th.
Corporal A. Fielding, 17th.
Corporal J. M. Mullen, 18th.
Lance-Corporal F. R. Lloyd, 18th.
Private P. Almond, 17th.
Private J. Casey, 18th.
Private J. H. Meakin, 17th.
Private P. Rivett, 17th.
Private J. Wright, 18th.

The Pressure continues in the Centre

2nd and 2nd/5th Battalions

An interesting little operation—it was almost a "one-man show"—was carried out at Givenchy in broad daylight on 27th September by Captain C. V. Broadbent, M.C., of the 2nd/5th Battalion. He had located an enemy post about five hundred yards from the battalion's lines and during the afternoon he crawled out with Serjeant W. Keating, D.C.M. (who had won his decoration with the 11th Battalion at Warneton at the end of 1915 for a gallant piece of wire-cutting), and Privates A. Barlow and W. Roach. On reaching the German post, Broadbent held up the sentry with his revolver while the rest of the patrol captured the whole garrison of five men. Broadbent then questioned his prisoners and, on learning that there was a machine gun near by, he sent Keating for it and brought the whole of the booty safely back to the battalion lines. For this gallant display of initiative, Broadbent received a bar to his Military Cross, while Keating, Barlow and Roach were awarded the Military Medal.

2ND/5TH BN

For the 2nd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O.) the final advance began on 2nd October, when patrols were able to make their way into La Bassée, while the remainder of the battalion moved forward to part of the old German positions known as the La Bassée line. That night Second-Lieutenant R. S. Lush led a patrol into Salomé, a distance of three thousand yards from that line. On 3rd October, "D" Company (Captain J. R. Bodington, M.C.) led the battalion as advanced guard through La Bassée and Salomé as far as Hantay, three miles east of La Bassée and five miles from what had for nearly four years been the British line at Givenchy. But the enemy was conducting his withdrawal deliberately, making use of every suitable line for resistance. It was therefore only to be expected that, when the leading troops of the battalion reached the Douai–Lille Canal (sometimes called the Haute Deule Canal) east of Hantay, it should encounter strong opposition, which was sufficient to hold up the advance. The battalion, which had had a long spell in the line, was relieved on the afternoon of 3rd October and went back to billets in Béthune, where it carried out intensive training in open warfare.

2ND BN.

About fifteen miles to the south, the 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. A. Kirkby, D.S.O.) was at this time carrying out an operation described in the War Diary as "minor" but none the less of some importance. For some nights another battalion had been trying to establish a foothold across the Trinquis Brook (an insignificant tributary of the River Scarpe near Arras) which the Germans had managed to turn into a substantial obstacle by skilful damming, resulting in extensive floods. Beyond it, the enemy firmly held ground which rose towards Sailly-en-Ostrevent. The establishment of a bridgehead across the brook was an essential preliminary to clearing the Germans from their position; and the 2nd Battalion took over the sector to the west of it on the night of

the 2nd 3rd October with this object in view, possibly on the following night. But "D" Company's commander, Captain A. Howarth, M.C., decided not to wait for darkness. On the afternoon of 3rd October, therefore, he sent Second-Lieutenant D. Blore, Corporal P. Beggs and Private T. Lackey, M.M., to reconnoitre the approaches to the brook. Their report was so encouraging that Howarth led a reconnaissance party across, and after driving away several German posts, established a bridgehead which he left under the command of Blore, with whom was Second-Lieutenant E. J. H. Orchard. The bridgehead was reinforced by the greater part of "D" Company which reached the bridge by sections across the open. Surprisingly the Germans put down no retaliatory bombardment, the more so as the activities of Blore, Orchard and Private J. J. Taylor with some Lewis guns succeeded in setting fire to a dump of flares and smoke bombs which sent up such a pillar of smoke as must have advertised the presence of an "unusual occurrence."

But the bombardment had merely been postponed. For while a carrying party of fifty men under Second-Lieutenants W. E. Ashley and A. Pickering were crossing the open ground west of the brook with material with which the Royal Engineers were to build a bridge across it, such a heavy barrage fell between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m. on 4th October that work had to be postponed, and it was not until 7 a.m. that the bridge was in position, thanks to some extent to the cover afforded by the ten-foot high eastern bank. The enemy's infantry had not, however, abandoned all interest in the stream; and at about 9 a.m. three Germans crawled forward towards "D" Company's posts. They were fired at by one of the Lewis gunners and ran, pursued by Orchard and Serjeant G. E. Williams, who found a post with a dead German in it some distance from the bank. At 7 p.m. the German artillery tried to shell the new posts but fired short, the shells falling amongst their own troops. The latter sent up their signal to indicate short shooting, but as it was unfortunately the same as the British "S O S" in this sector they merely got British shells instead of their own—and more of them into the bargain! During the night two more bridges were thrown across the stream. On one occasion Blore was blown off the bridge by a shell but returned to it and personally repaired a gap made in it by shell fire. At 5.45 a.m. the Germans attacked "D" Company's right post under a barrage but were driven back in disorder; Private Turner showed great coolness when about to be bayoneted, grasping the bayonet with his hand and warding off the thrust; and Private J. Beardmore climbed out of his post and got his Lewis gun into action on the side of the bank. Almost throughout the 5th the enemy's artillery was active and at 7.30 p.m. his infantry attacked. Blore, who happened to be at company headquarters at the time, was sent up through the barrage with No. 15 Platoon to reinforce the bridgehead. The attack was stopped; moreover, to relieve the pressure on the weary "D" Company, "C" Company (Captain G. N. Stange, M.C.) sent a party across the brook to patrol to the northwards,

while two platoons of "A" Company under Second-Lieutenant W. E. Ashley were put at Howarth's disposal for use as he thought fit. Orchard's runner, Private R. Boyd, did very good work during the attack: though he had been badly shaken and was suffering from gas, he refused to leave his officer and was able to bring back the news of the failure of the German attempts. Two more attempts on the posts were made during the night but without success. On the other hand, "C" Company established three posts across the brook, being relieved later by Ashley's two platoons. Throughout the 6th the Germans continued to shell the forward positions, seriously wounding Blore. That evening the battalion was relieved and marched back to Battery Valley, where it found waiting for it warm messages of congratulation from the Corps, Divisional and Brigade Commanders on the gallantry and endurance of all concerned. In spite of the heavy shelling, the casualties during these four days had amounted to no more than one officer wounded, two men killed and about twelve wounded. The rewards given for this operation were :—

Bar to Military Cross

Captain A. Howarth, M.C.

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant D. Blore.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Corporal P. Beggs. Private T. Lackey, M.M.

Military Medals

Serjeant G. E. Williams.
Lance-Corporal E. Hirst.
Private J. S. Bates.
Private R. Boyd.
Corporal H. Howarth.
Private T. S. Beardmore.
Private A. Birchall.
Private J. Taylor.

THE RIGHT MOVES AS WELL

"CAMBRAI, 1918," "HINDENBURG LINE," "SELLE"

2nd, 1st 5th, 6th, 1st 7th, 1st 8th, 10th and 19th Battalions

The sort of lodgement which has just been described, repeated elsewhere, had the effect of loosening the Germans' hold on their positions. The month of October, 1918, saw the enemy retiring on almost the whole of his front, with the intention (not always achieved) of standing where he chose. His withdrawal brought the Allied armies into types of scenery that had long been denied them. For the first time for many months, troops accustomed to the desolation of the Hindenburg Line saw untouched fields and houses —and civilians who gave them the warmest possible welcome. It was near the right of the British line that battalions of the Regiment
10TH BN. first became engaged during that month, beginning with the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cotton, D.S.O.), which, after its fight near Gouzeaucourt, had a short period of rest and training at Lesboeufs and Rocquigny before moving forward again on 5th October to Equancourt. There, two days later, it heard the official

announcement that Germany had formally approached the United States of America with a view to bringing about a cessation of hostilities. On 8th October it moved forward through Gonnelieu, past Villers Outréaux, Selvigny and Montigny, to the sugar factory at Inchy, some three miles west-north-west of Le Cateau, moving back a little a few hours later to a position south-west of Inchy and digging in facing east.

There on the afternoon of 11th October it received orders to take part on the following day in an attack at Neuvilly on the River Selle, four thousand yards north-north-west of Le Cateau. The brigade plan was that the 12th Manchester Regiment on the north and the 9th Duke of Wellington's Regiment on the south should cross the bridges over the Selle at 5 a.m., make good the line of the railway beyond it under cover of a creeping barrage, and then establish themselves on the high ground north-east of the village; "B" Company of the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers behind the Manchester and "A" Company behind the Duke of Wellington's were to cross the river, "mop up" the village from north and south simultaneously and occupy a position north of the railway behind the Manchester and be ready to support it if it was counter-attacked; and the other two companies of the 10th were to be in reserve, "C" on the right and "D" on the left, at call if needed by "B" or "A."

At 1.15 a.m. on 12th October the battalion began to move up to its assembly positions west of the river, which it reached by 4 a.m., except for "A" Company (Captain A. Wareham), which was delayed by gas shelling. Our barrage came down at 5 a.m. and roused the enemy to speedy retaliation which resulted in Wareham being wounded and replaced by Lieutenant W. Davidson, M.C., from battalion headquarters. On the left the attack went well in spite of stiff opposition, the Manchester crossing the river, storming the high ground and beginning consolidation. "B" Company (Captain J. Knowles) of the 10th, following the Manchester, began to clear Neuvilly village from north-west to south-east at 6 a.m., in the face of strong resistance by a Jaeger regiment, which was supported by many machine guns and cleverly posted snipers. Second-Lieutenant S. W. Manning led his platoon with great gallantry in this phase, capturing two parties of snipers, who were in a very strong position in a house, by bombing them out. He was later almost entirely responsible for the capture of some fifty prisoners, including two officers, and for the killing of many snipers in the village.

Things had not gone so well on the right, where the Duke of Wellington's had been unable to reach the top of the ridge, though they had crossed the river and reached the railway. As their rear platoons were still on the river, "A" of the 10th was unable to cross it and suffered considerable casualties from German machine guns and snipers still on the south bank. "C" Company (Lieutenant R. Graham) therefore began at 5.48 a.m. to clear the enemy from the eastern side of the village, meeting strong opposition from houses and from a factory south-east of the cemetery. It was during this phase

of the action that Corporal Frank Lester gained undying fame at the cost of his life. With a party of about seven men under an officer, he was the first to enter a house through the back door and shot two Germans as they tried to escape by the front door. A minute later a fall of masonry blocked the door by which the party had entered. The only remaining exit into the street was under fire at point-blank range, while the street itself was swept by machine-gun fire. Lester saw that a German sniper was causing heavy casualties to a party in a house across the street and that they were faced with a choice between crossing the death-trap of the street and being picked off one by one where they were. Exclaiming "I'll settle him," Lester dashed out into the street, though he well knew the inevitable result, shot the sniper at close quarters and fell mortally wounded himself. "To save their lives he sacrificed his own" are the words which end the citation notifying the posthumous award to him of one of the finest V.Cs. won by the Regiment in the war. Lester's company commander, Graham, bore an important part in these events. He shot two snipers with his revolver and rescued a wounded N.C.O. by dragging him into a house from the street in spite of the machine-gun fire which swept down it.

In the meanwhile "B" Company had practically cleared its share of the village by 8.30 a.m., taking about thirty prisoners and killing many Germans. Then, acting on the operation orders, it moved up to the ridge in support of the Manchester. At about the same time, "D" Company (Captain F. W. Brittnell) was ordered to reinforce that unit, which had become isolated owing to the divisions on the flanks not being level with it, though two of its platoons were detached to clear the cemetery into which some Germans had returned from the railway. The enemy, indeed, throughout the morning (perhaps enabled to do so by the bad visibility which persisted throughout the day) had infiltrated parties back into the village by way of a sunken road and a railway arch of such length as to amount almost to a tunnel. By midday the enemy had in effect reoccupied Neuvilly; so that at 12.50 p.m., "A," part of "B," and "C" Companies had to be ordered to clear it again, working from north to south. "B" Company met a large party of Germans at the entrance to the village but scattered them with Lewis-gun fire. The enemy evidently attached great importance to the retention of Neuvilly, for at 3 p.m. they put down a heavy barrage and counter-attacked the 12th Manchester, who were driven back, with the elements of "D" and "B" Companies of the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers attached to them, to a position near the river. The Germans succeeded in regaining the line of the railway and part of the village, but were prevented from crossing the river by elements of all four companies of the 10th which had taken up positions on its bank. At 5 p.m. "A" and "C" Companies were once more sent to clear the village south of the river; they found no Germans but were much troubled by machine-gun fire from the north bank. When darkness fell, the Manchester were established on the far bank of the

river, whose crossings were held by "C," "B" and "A" Companies of the Lancashire Fusiliers, the whole battalion being relieved at 5 a.m. on 13th October and returning very tired to Inchy. Its losses had been 5 officers and 182 other ranks; it had captured 2 officers, 58 other ranks and a number of machine guns, though many were retaken by the enemy in their counter-attack. In addition to Lester's V.C., the battalion's good work was recognized by the award of the Military Cross to Lieutenant R. Graham and Second-Lieutenant S. W. Manning, of the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Serjeant J. H. Gott for cutting gaps in a series of wire fences under intense machine-gun fire and continuing this work in spite of wounds until he collapsed through exhaustion and loss of blood, and of the Military Medal to Privates E. B. Hughes and J. Willcocks.

6TH BN.

Somewhat farther to the right, the reconstituted 6th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. F. Gross, D.S.O., South Wales Borderers) made its first appearance in action. Leaving the American training area, where the amalgamation of the 6th and 12th Battalions had taken place, at the end of September, the battalion moved up through Corbie, Harbonnières, Montauban, Ronssoy and Gouy to Le Hamage farm, 2,700 yards south-east of Villers Outréaux, which it reached early on 9th October. At 2.30 a.m. that day the battalion received orders to clear the eastern outskirts of Elincourt and capture Pinon Wood to the north-east of it. The unit moved off at 3 a.m., formed up north-west of Elincourt at 4.50 a.m. and opened its attack at 5.20 a.m. Unfortunately, the barrage was late and caused many casualties amongst the leading troops. The advance was also stopped by mist from 6 a.m. to 7.15 a.m., after which, however, events moved rapidly: Pinon Wood was taken by 8.45 a.m. and the battalion pushed on to the Maretz–Clary road, which it reached at 10.50 a.m. At 4 p.m. the battalion was placed in divisional reserve. At 3.45 a.m. on 10th October it joined the rest of the 198th Infantry Brigade at Maretz and marched along the old Roman road to Reumont, where at 6.15 a.m. it formed up for an attack with "B" Company (Captain W. Vestey Jones) on the right, "C" (Captain L. B. L. Seckham, M.C.) in the centre, "D" (Captain D. Pennington, M.C.) on the left and "A" (Captain R. A. V. White) in reserve. The advance began at 6.45 a.m. and almost at once the battalion came under heavy shelling; but it pushed on and reached the Le Cateau–Inchy road at 8.10 a.m. In spite of heavy casualties, particularly in "D" Company which had the difficult task of keeping touch with the division on its left, the leading companies pushed on to a sunken road some 1,000 yards west of Montay, where they reorganized. At 5 p.m. the battalion was ordered to attack Montay and to join up with the King's Liverpool on the high ground beyond it. As the orders were not received till darkness was about to fall, the company commanders could not carry out a reconnaissance before being involved in the attack. "A" Company at once came under heavy machine-gun fire; but, in spite of this, of the darkness and of the exhaustion of troops, it gained a footing in the

outskirts of Montay. The village lies in a hollow, and as White's position would have been most difficult in daylight he was ordered to withdraw soon after midnight. Higher authority, however, having a wider view of the situation, sent a message at 4.30 a.m. on 11th October, saying that Montay must be held at all costs. Vestey Jones and his "B" Company were therefore at once sent forward to reoccupy the position vacated by "A" Company; and by 6 a.m. he was able to report that he had done so. The enemy kept up a fairly hot fire on the position throughout the day but with little effect. The battalion was relieved late the same day, having lost 1 officer and 15 other ranks killed, 3 officers and 163 other ranks wounded and 13 men missing.

It was, however, to enjoy a very short rest. For on 16th October it moved forward to Reumont and at 5.30 p.m. took over from a South African battalion a turnip-field about a mile and a half from the village and to the south side of the Roman road which runs through it. At 11 a.m. on 17th October the battalion was ordered to cross the River Selle at St. Benin and seize Le Cateau station, on the supposition that the South African brigade held the railway triangle north of the station and that the Scottish Horse were well forward south of it. "A" and "B" Companies were to lead the attack, "D" in support and "C" in reserve. The advance began at 11.15 a.m.; and, taking advantage of the cover afforded by a steep ravine which drops slantingly from the Roman road to the Selle valley, the leading companies made rapid progress. When, however, they emerged into the valley, they came under heavy machine-gun fire from its steep eastern slope and shells began to drop in the ravine. Nevertheless "A," "B" and "D" Companies had made their way across the river before it was discovered that the South Africans and the Scottish Horse were not where they had been thought to be and the operation was cancelled. It took orders some time to reach those companies; but by 3 p.m. they had disengaged and returned to their turnip-field, which proved to be a very cold and uncomfortable lodging.

It was therefore with pleasure that orders were received in the small hours of 18th October that the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers were to relieve the 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers in Le Cateau and complete the clearing of the town. The unit moved off at once and arrived in Le Cateau at 3.45 a.m. to find a confused situation and no guides, owing to the fact that the Dublin Fusiliers were still busily fighting the Germans in many parts of the town. Conditions were made worse by the dampness of the night, a thick mist, and persistent high-explosive and gas shelling. Not until 10 a.m. was the relief complete, "B" Company taking over the right sector from the Selle up to and including the Faubourg de France south-east of the town, "C" the Faubourg de Landrecies to the east of it and "D" the Faubourg St. Martin to the north of it, with "A" in support in the centre of the town. By midday the gas shelling had stopped, the mist had cleared and all German pockets in the town had been

"mopped up." Developments elsewhere now made it possible to complete the task for which the Battle of the Selle had been fought, namely the capture of all the high ground east of that stream—for such it is. At 2.10 p.m., therefore, the battalion moved to some clay-pits in the Faubourg de Landrecies, close to the railway and about two hundred yards to the east of the road leading from Le Cateau to Fontaine-au-Bois, as the starting point for an attack to capture the crest of the ridge which lies east of Le Cateau and between the road just mentioned and that running from Le Cateau to Pommereuil. "B" Company (Captain I. S. Rutherford) was to be on the right, "C" (Lieutenant A. F. Stoker) in the centre, and "D" (Captain C. H. Potter, M.C.) on the left, with "A" (Lieutenant J. W. Deane) in reserve. Profiting by the costly lesson learnt by the South Africans when they had attempted the same task in broad daylight, Lieutenant-Colonel Gross decided not to launch his attack until 5.15 p.m., when advantage could be taken of the falling darkness. The three forward companies came under heavy machine-gun fire soon after they began to move forward; and, as the troops on the left could not give their expected co-operation as they were about to be relieved, the left flank of the 6th was exposed until Deane sent parties of his company to fill the gap. The soundness of the Commanding Officer's choice of time soon showed itself: for parties of the leading companies were able to stalk many German posts in the darkness and take a number of prisoners, who said they could not see our men till they were on top of them. By 6.30 p.m. the battalion's objective had been fully taken and patrols pushed out towards the Richemont stream which runs half-way between Le Cateau and Pommereuil, at a cost of 18 casualties and a gain of 35 prisoners and 6 machine guns. Late that night the battalion was relieved and after temporary duty in another part of the brigade sector moved back on 20th October to a well-earned rest at Prémont.

1ST/5TH, 1ST/7TH AND 1ST 8TH BNS.

It was now the turn of the 125th Infantry Brigade to distinguish itself again—this time in the Battle of the River Selle, of which the historian of the 42nd Division said: "The laurels gained here are worthy of a place beside those won at Minden." After its successful breach of the Hindenburg Line at the end of September, the brigade rested at Havrincourt Wood till 7th October, when it moved up to Esnes and, on the 10th, through Haucourt and—perhaps unconscious of the fact—across the scene of the 2nd Battalion's fine defence on 26th August, 1914, during the Battle of Le Cateau, to Fontaine-au-Pire. Two days later it relieved the 1st New Zealand Brigade in the line east of Briastre, about a mile north of the scene of the 6th Battalion's activities just described. The relief was not made easier by a combination of extreme darkness, heavy rain and three small attacks delivered against an isolated part of the 1st/8th Battalion, commanded by Corporal J. W. Baldwin, which repulsed them with heavy loss and the capture of a prisoner. A more serious attempt against the same unit came on the afternoon of 13th October when a heavy barrage fell on its front line and, at 5.15 p.m.,

the forward companies reported that the Germans had driven in the posts on their right and that they had themselves suffered heavy casualties. Two platoons were sent up to reinforce the threatened sector ; and Captain D. Cumming, M.C., who was in command of the two front-line companies, led forward all available men from his command post to re-establish the right flank near Belle Vue and if necessary form a defensive flank to the south. Baldwin again did splendid work. Although wounded early in this affair, he hung on to his position until turned out of it by heavy enfilade fire. He then took his men to another position and refused to have his wound dressed until he was ordered back to the aid post. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. After continued shelling and the loss of 3 officers and 50 other ranks, quiet was restored with the battalion's line running along the road east of the river close to Briastre.

There were, however, signs of a possible German withdrawal from the close proximity of the Selle ; and during the next few days patrols were sent out by the 1st 7th (which had relieved the 1st/8th) and 1st/5th Battalions to see what progress could be made. On 15th October, soon after midnight, a platoon of "B" Company of the 1st/5th tried to establish posts on the Belle Vue–Solesmes road. As they moved forward they heard sounds of the enemy working in a factory. Lance-Corporal W. Armstrong led his section towards this point so quietly that he was able to go in and take a light machine gun, which was in the firing position, before the Germans realized what was happening. Twenty enemy then appeared and opened fire : but they were too late and Armstrong got his section away with their trophy and without casualties—and got a Military Medal for his skill—while the company was able to establish posts a short distance east of the Selle.

After a short rest near Quiévy, the brigade relieved the Manchester Brigade in the positions it had in the meanwhile won south-east of Solesmes in the face of stubborn opposition by the hitherto "invincible" 25th German Division, which was to regret still further its encounters with Lancashire troops on 23rd October. For on that day the 125th Brigade had the task of carrying the divisional front forward to a line just short of the River Harpies to the south-east of Romeries, as a preliminary to the capture of a position beyond that stream by the New Zealanders. The preparations for the attack on the 22nd were made more difficult than usual by the need to carry out in pitch darkness a series of complicated manœuvres in touch with the enemy so as to suit the barrage plans of neighbouring divisions, by the presence of German gas and machine guns seemingly everywhere, by the fact that the enemy had the observation, and by frequent changes of orders. The final orders could not be issued by the brigadier till 2 p.m.—and then back at Belle Vue—after which the company commanders of one unit at least had to crawl considerable distances to attend their Commanding Officer's conference. The result was that platoon commanders got their

orders too late to allow objectives to be pointed out in daylight. The 1st/7th were to attack on the right and the 1st 8th on the left, with the 1st/5th in support with the special role of forming defensive flanks if necessary. Thermite shells were to help the keeping of direction—the attack was at a north-easterly slant to the starting line—by marking the flanks and centre; but their efficacy may be doubted in view of the mist that prevailed during the action.

At 3.26 a.m. on 23rd October the 1st 7th (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brewis, D.S.O.) advanced with "A" Company (Captain W. J. O'Bryen, M.C.) on the right and "D" (Captain W. Kelly) on the left, with platoons of "B" (Captain E. C. Sington) attached for mopping up and consolidation. They soon took their first objective; but the fight for the second objective was very severe. "A" Company was held up by a nest of machine guns lurking in shell-holes and withdrew into dead ground while O'Bryen evolved a plan for outflanking them. He was helped by the timely arrival of the battalion intelligence officer, Lieutenant F. B. Webb, who came up through heavy shelling and machine-gun fire to get information which he sent back to battalion headquarters. At 7 a.m. two tanks arrived from the left. With their help, O'Bryen led some men out to a flank and organized an attack which was ably and gallantly carried out, particularly by himself and Lance-Serjeant F. Hesford who, although knocked down by the explosion of a shell which killed the man next to him, continued his task till the offending guns were captured. "A" Company was then able to push on, though more machine-gun nests were encountered and it suffered severe losses. At one point there was a pause because all the officers there had been killed: but Second-Lieutenant J. McCready, of "C" Company in support, dashed forward, took command and led the men on to their final objective where "D" Company and the rest of "A" Company had established themselves. By 7.40 a.m. the 1st/7th had splendidly fulfilled their task, at the cost of 3 officers and 95 other ranks.

On the left of the brigade front, the 1st 8th (Lieutenant-Colonel J. S. MacLeod) had had an equally exciting though not so exacting a time. With "A" Company (Captain D. G. Bird) on the right, "B" (Captain D. Cumming, M.C.) on the left, and "D" in rear of "B" with the task of mopping up and holding a wood and cross-roads south of Vertigneul and the railway beyond it, the battalion advanced at 3.26 a.m. It at once met strong opposition on both flanks, particularly from machine-gun nests, one of which Second-Lieutenant C. W. Sumner charged, knocking out the crew and capturing the gun. Another post was similarly dealt with by Serjeant C. Carter, who, with two men, not only killed the gunner and captured the gun but also took nine prisoners in a dug-out close by. By 3.44 a.m. the first stage of the attack had been successful, though many Germans had had to be killed in the process. The line pressed on, encountering more machine guns stubbornly holding out. Captain D. G. Bird charged a nest of these at the head of his men, bayoneting the whole

garrison. The bayonet was needed to dislodge several other parties which often used their bayonets in defence. Lance-Corporal J. W. Walmsley was wounded but led his section in a rush on one of the posts, putting all its defenders out of action with the bayonet. Bird and Sumner finally cleared the way and led their men through heavy fire to the final objective. Even then the battalion's work was not over, for it was subjected to strong retaliation by the enemy. Again Bird and Carter did valuable work in organizing the consolidation of the position, as did Second-Lieutenant W. Charnock, who, finding that most of the men in a platoon detailed for mopping up had become casualties, organized a joint platoon with his men and filled the gap, killing and taking prisoner many Germans. The adjutant, Captain E. Fairhurst, M.C., had played a valuable part throughout the attack in obtaining information of the greatest importance: when communication with the leading troops broke down, he went forward from battalion headquarters to find out how things stood and where the companies were. It was from him that the Commanding Officer first learnt that the battalion had reached its final objective and that brigade headquarters received news of the position of the battalion on the right of the 1st/8th. Other members of the battalion headquarters displayed gallantry in this action: the battalion's chaplain, the Reverend C. Smith, heard that a man was lying wounded out in the open under heavy shell fire at some distance from the aid post and, rushing out with a stretcher-bearer, brought him safely in; and Regimental Serjeant-Major W. A. Girling kept communications going between the attacking companies and battalion headquarters, organized men who had lost their way and helped wounded men to safety throughout the action. The battalion's losses had been 2 officers and 60 other ranks; its gains 1 officer and 80 other ranks prisoners, 37 machine guns, one light field gun and two trench mortars.

At 8.40 a.m., the appointed moment, the New Zealanders passed through the brigade to continue the advance to the division's final objective. Shortly after noon the brigade marched back to Viesly, having gained the following honours:—

1ST/7TH BATTALION

Second Bar to Military Cross (the only one awarded to the Regiment)
Captain W. J. O'Bryen, M.C.

Military Cross
Lieutenant F. B. Webb. Second-Lieutenant J. McCready.

Distinguished Conduct Medal
Lance-Serjeant F. Hesford.

Military Medal
Lance-Corporal A. R. Finch. Lance-Corporal A. E. Whitham.
Private J. Tempest, D.C.M.

1ST/8TH BATTALION

Bar to Military Cross

Captain D. Cumming, M.C. Captain E. Fairhurst, M.C.

Military Cross

Captain D. G. Bird. Second-Lieutenant W. Charnock.
The Reverend C. Smith. Second-Lieutenant C. W. Sumner.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Regimental Serjeant-Major W. A. Girling.
Serjeant C. Carter. Lance-Corporal J. W. Walmsley.

Bar to Military Medal

Lance-Corporal H. Lewis, M.M. Private W. Spedding, M.M.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major J. Riley. Lance-Serjeant T. Lockley.
Corporal A. Pease. Private H. Eachus.
Private J. Falconer. Private H. Green.
Private H. A. Jackson. Private F. Peace.
Private C. H. Perkins. Private G. H. Robson.
Private T. Vigar.

Two other appearances of the Regiment in this Battle of the Selle remain to be recorded. Some five miles to the north-west of the scenes just described, the 19th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. Fenn, D.S.O.) was taken away from its pioneer work and, on 13th October, detailed "A" and "C" and half of "B" Companies to attack and take Saulzoir and the line of the railway beyond the River Selle to the east of it as the first objective, with the high ground beyond it as the second. Lieutenant R. B. Norman earned the Military Cross in this fight by the way in which he led his platoon through very heavy machine-gun fire and, even after he had been wounded in the head, he went on directing the fire of his platoon until he was again hit. This time his wounds were so severe that he had to go back to battalion headquarters, where nevertheless he gave a full, clear and most valuable report on the situation. Men of the battalion penetrated into Saulzoir and got as far as the Selle; but a counter-attack, supported by tanks, prevented the objectives being reached anywhere on the divisional front. 19TH BN.

To complete the story of the 19th Battalion in this area, mention must be made of very gallant work done on 1st November by Private A. Wolfenden. Two platoons of "B" Company were given the task of placing bridges over the River Rhonelle, east of Famars, three miles south of Valenciennes, to enable the 147th Infantry Brigade to cross to the attack. Wolfenden's section came under heavy machine-gun fire and its N.C.O. and several men were wounded. Wolfenden took command, rushed his bridge into position, crossed the river, attacked the machine gun and captured it and its team. His prompt and plucky action enabled the bridge on his right also to be erected. He received a well-earned Distinguished Conduct Medal.

The 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cotton, D.S.O.) 10TH BN.

held a sort of "watching brief" at Neuvilly on 19th and 20th October to prevent the enemy crossing to the south of the Selle during the attack of another brigade. They were able to make a direct contribution with their Lewis guns with which they did good execution amongst enemy trying to escape ; and eight Germans surrendered to "A" Company. It was, however, an unpleasant experience as the village was subjected to heavy gas shelling.

2ND BN. It fell to the lot of the 2nd Battalion (Major W. B. Curell in temporary command) to bring up the rear (as it were) of the battle with a spirited action that was also its own last fight of the war. It was fitting that this should have taken place only some fifteen miles from the scene of its first fight, the first engagement of the Regiment in the war, on 26th August, 1914. From rest billets at Villers-en-Cauchies, the battalion moved on 24th October to an area north-east of Saulzoir. That evening "A" Company (Captain S. Clarke, M.C.) was lent to the 2nd King's Own for the next day's operations, which involved the capture of Querenaing, while the rest of the unit relieved the Seaforth Highlanders in Verchain. The King's Own attack was a complete success, and "A" Company returned to the fold. During the afternoon of 25th October, "B" Company (Lieutenant A. B. Winser) with "A" Company in support relieved the King's Own, and "C" Company (Captain G. N. Stange, M.C.) with "D" (Captain A. Howarth, M.C.) in support relieved the 2nd Essex Regiment, in both cases on the railway line between Querenaing and Artres. Curell put his battalion headquarters in Querenaing château. At about 10 p.m. orders were received from brigade headquarters to send forward patrols in order to establish a line on the sunken road leading from Artres to Famars. As the position of the flank divisions was unknown, there was a risk that "B" and "C" Companies, to whom it fell to carry out these orders, would be isolated ; they were therefore told to hold the road as an outpost position and to regard the line held by "A" and "D" Companies on the railway as the main battle zone. Before, however, Stange and Winser could make their plan, the brigadier had suggested, and Curell had agreed, that it would be best to stage a proper attack in the morning, in conjunction with other troops and under a barrage. "B" and "C" Companies were accordingly told to close in to their right so as to make room for the 2nd Essex Regiment on their left, and then to form up as right and left front attacking companies, with the sunken road and the village of Artres as their objectives ; "A" Company was to form a defensive flank on the right and to mop up Artres ; while "D" was to support and replace "B" and "C" in the sunken road. Zero was at 10 a.m. on 26th October. At 9 a.m. orders were received that a special platoon under an officer was to be detailed to push on after the final objective had been reached and to establish a bridgehead over La Rhonelle stream to the north-east of Artres : the task, which was stressed as being of the highest importance, was entrusted to Second-Lieutenant W. D. Henshall and a platoon of "B" Company. The

attack went well. By midday all objectives had been reported captured, Henshall's platoon was nearing the stream, "A" Company had formed a defensive flank in touch with the troops on the right and "C" was linked with the Essex on the final objective. In the meanwhile Curell, who had established an advanced headquarters in a château north-west of Artres which proved to have an excellent view over a wide area, was in touch by telephone with the adjutant, Captain V. F. S. Hawkins, M.C., at his main headquarters and through him with the brigadier. Again and again Curell was able to report targets ripe for bombardment—first a trench mortar spotted by Winser, later several enemy preparations for counter-attacks on neighbouring divisions. Henshall was wounded about noon after most skilfully getting his platoon across the stream and taking 57 prisoners; but Lance-Corporal C. H. Gotts took command of the platoon and, when it was held up by a trench mortar, he took two men forward and captured it with its crew of six. The rest of "B" Company was soon across the stream and, thanks to skilful work by Private J. A. Shelmerdine who worked his way forward alone and got in rear of a machine gun, rushing it single-handed and capturing gun and crew, set about establishing the bridgehead more firmly. In this they were helped by Clarke, who, now that the King's Own had established posts on the right, could take his "A" Company from its defensive flank and dribble it across the stream by a bridge which, though broken, was passable. Under very heavy fire he stood on the bridge and issued orders while the company was crossing. It was largely his very cool and capable handling of this difficult task that enabled a safe and permanent line to be established on the far side of the stream. Second-Lieutenant E. Halstead did yeoman work here, getting his platoon across under heavy fire, fanning out Lewis-gun sections on the far side and finally establishing himself about two hundred yards above the stream. The fire power thus built up, largely on the initiative of section commanders, was heavy enough to enable the rest of the company to get across. The enemy suddenly seemed to break and dozens surrendered. The men of "A" Company took full advantage of this change in the situation and, of their own accord, began rounding up machine guns. They were, however, a long way ahead of any troops on the flanks and a control had to be imposed and a line laid down. By 3 p.m. the position was firmly established. Half an hour later Curell saw from his eyrie that the enemy were massing opposite the battalion and its neighbour. The artillery soon put down a barrage which caused many casualties and did much to break up the counter-attack which the Germans delivered at 4 p.m. under cover of a heavy bombardment. The Lancashire Fusiliers were not affected except by the latter and the gas with which it filled Artres and the river valley. In spite of all the difficulties, Lieutenant A. R. Topping, M.C., and Second-Lieutenant E. J. H. Orchard brought the rations up across country to Curell's château, with all the transport wearing box respirators.

On the morning of the 27th it was intended that the advance should be continued with a barrage to the next sunken road. Stange, however, asked that he should be allowed to do the job without a barrage and by "peaceful penetration." This was agreed and he went out to reconnoitre with Serjeant E. H. Sharp, who came back an hour later, badly wounded and with the sad news that Stange had been killed by a machine-gun bullet through his head. The projected advance was abandoned and, apart from heavy shelling, the situation remained as it was until the battalion was relieved late on 28th, having lost 2 officers and 6 other ranks killed and 49 other casualties. The honours awarded for this action included :—

Distinguished Service Order
Major W. B. Curell.

Bar to Military Cross
Captain S. Clarke, M.C.

Military Cross
Second-Lieutenant E. Halstead.
Second-Lieutenant W. D. Henshall.

Distinguished Conduct Medal
Lance-Corporal C. H. Gotts.
Private J. A. Shelmerdine.

Military Medal
Serjeant G. Lowe.
Serjeant E. H. Sharp.
Corporal W. E. Bridgman.
Lance-Corporal A. Derrick.
Private L. R. Barber.
Private H. Evans.
Private T. Hailwood.
Private D. W. John.
Private A. J. McLaughlin.
Serjeant E. A. Lyford.
Serjeant J. Walmsley.
Corporal G. Mather.
Lance-Corporal W. Whitlam.
Private W. Dunn.
Private W. H. Frost.
Private R. House.
Private H. Lythgoe.
Private R. Pollock.
Private W. H. Ridings.

The Battle of Courtrai

1st, 17th and 18th Battalions

"COURTRAI"

The attacks near Ypres at the end of September, 1918, in which the Regiment played a full part as has been described, had loosened the Germans' hold on Belgium and severely shaken their morale. But they were still far from their own country ; and they needed harrying and hustling, and often hard fighting, if they were not to settle down again or, at best, retire with their numbers, equipment and supplies in such good trim that they could make a series of prolonged stands on lines of defence of their own choosing. Three battalions of the Regiment took a notable share in the Battle of Courtrai and its dependent actions of Ooteghem and Tieghem during this process.

South-east Lancashire to the Scheldt

17th and 18th Battalions

On 11th October the 17th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. Jones, M.C.) and the 18th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jewels, D.S.O., M.C.) marched up to an area south and south-east of Becelaere. On the following day an assembly position was reconnoitred. During that night a patrol of "W" Company of the 17th under Second-Lieutenant H. Cook went out towards Goldflake Farm, 1,500 yards south of Dadizeele, met a German post and attacked it, Cook shooting two of the enemy. Late on the 13th, a very wet day, the two units moved forward to assembly positions about Vijtwegen, also south of Dadizeele. Whilst forming up under a heavy German bombardment, the whole of a Lewis-gun team of the 17th was wounded. One of its members, Private A. Walmsley, though himself hit in the arm, carried the rest to a place of safety, got a man from another section to carry the spare-parts bag and magazines for the gun and did some very useful work in the initial stages of the attack in the morning. He remained at duty till he was very badly wounded a second time and his gun was put out of action.

17TH BN. At 5.35 a.m. on 14th October, in a dense mist, the 17th Battalion led the attack of the 104th Infantry Brigade from a starting line running south-west to north-east about a mile south-east of Dadizeele, with the task of attaining the brigade's first objective, the Menin–Roulers railway about 4,500 yards away. "Y" Company (Captain C. S. Atkinson, M.C.) was on the right, "W" (Captain H. G. Leaver, M.C.) on the left, with "Z" (Lieutenant M. D. Walker, M.C.) and "X" (Lieutenant J. K. B. Crawford) in right and left support. Many German machine-gun posts were encountered and put out of action. Especially good work was done at this stage by Second-Lieutenants F. Aspden (who was killed later in the day), H. Drummond and A. C. Stephenson whose coolness, dash and ability accounted for the capture of several machine guns with a minimum of loss to his platoon. Captain Atkinson at one point found a party of fifteen Germans firing four field guns: with one man he charged the party, put them to flight and captured the guns. (It is significant of the demoralization which was already sapping the German Army that guns were often captured at this time complete with their sights and ammunition.) Another who did valuable work was Lieutenant P. J. McKevitt, who, in spite of the mist, managed to keep his men under control and close behind the barrage right up to the objective, setting a most encouraging example to all. The Commanding Officer was kept well informed on the situation, largely thanks to Lieutenant C. Huntly, who moved continually up and down the line and found out how the attack was progressing. Whilst so employed, accompanied by only two men, he came upon a party of twelve Germans in a trench, rushed at them and captured the lot. Unfortunately, he had to report that, in some places, the

barrage was being followed too closely with dire results to the troops: Lieutenant-Colonel Jones at once went forward to impose caution, with the tragic result that he was hit, dying of wounds next day—a great loss and a fine character who had risen by sheer merit from the ranks of the Regular Army. Atkinson then took command and led the battalion to its objective by the time laid down, pushing on and reaching Slunschoek, one thousand yards east of the railway and two thousand yards south-west of Moorsele, at 7.5 a.m., having captured 100 prisoners, 6 field guns, 2 trench mortars and 16 machine guns at a cost of 130 casualties.

18TH BN. The 18th Battalion and the 19th Durham Light Infantry then passed through under a heavy barrage and in the same mist as had helped the opening of the attack. The Germans did not offer very strong resistance once the first line of defence near Moorsele had been pierced. But they needed sharp fighting, in which Lieutenant-Colonel Jewels took the lead. Lieutenant F. A. D. Roberts led a party forward when the advance was checked and succeeded in dislodging the enemy, securing valuable positions and inflicting heavy losses on his opponents. It was at this stage, too, that Second-Lieutenant A. E. V. Gallon was conspicuous for his resource: his company commander was hit at the start and he promptly took command and led the company through heavy fire throughout the operation without the help of any other officer. Amongst other achievements, he rushed a battery of 5·9-inch guns which were in action at Herthoek, 1,200 yards south-west of Moorsele, and killed or took prisoner the whole of the crew. By 11 a.m. the battalion had reached its objective south-east of Moorsele; and in the afternoon an outpost line farther east was established. The casualties were light. Next day, 15th October, a slight further advance was made and the line pushed up to the Wevelghem–Gulleghem road, facing south-south-east.

The two battalions then enjoyed two days' rest before moving forward during the day of 18th October to the neighbourhood of Bisseghem, west-south-west of Courtrai, so as to be at hand in case the 106th Infantry Brigade in the same division needed help in crossing the River Lys. The move was timely; for the 106th Brigade, after an unsuccessful attempt the night before, crossed the river at Marcke, two miles south-west of Courtrai, during the early part of the night of 18th/19th October. The 104th Brigade got sudden orders to cross that same night and continue the divisional attack next day. By 2 a.m. on 19th the whole brigade was over the river, the 17th Battalion crossing by a single-plank footbridge west of Marcke, and had reached its assembly positions on the eastern outskirts of the village, with its three battalions in line, the 17th Lancashire Fusiliers on the right and the 18th in the centre. Daybreak came in a thick mist at 5.30 a.m.

17TH BN. At that hour the attack was launched in a south-easterly direction. The 17th met with no opposition and reached its objective, Marionette Cabaret, by 7 a.m. The success was at once exploited and

the line pushed forward another 1,000 yards by 10.15 a.m., though further progress was stopped by machine-gun fire. The 18th met with rather more opposition though, gallantly and ably led by Lieutenant-Colonel Jewels, it reached its objective, the Hooghe ridge, by 8 a.m. Attempts to push on were frustrated by machine-gun and light artillery fire. The final line of the two units that day ran south-west to north-east about two miles south-east of Courtrai. 18TH BN.

The attack was resumed on 20th October, the divisional objective being now the River Scheldt. The 18th Battalion acted as advanced guard to the brigade, moving in a south-easterly direction on the east side of the Courtrai-Tournai road. It encountered hostile machine-gun, trench-mortar and artillery fire of sufficient power to prevent it reaching its final objective on the Kreupel ridge till the evening. Meanwhile, the 17th Battalion, attacking at 7 a.m. in a loose formation and without a barrage, reached its objective by 9 a.m., having driven back slight opposition offered by field guns and by machine guns, of which it captured one. At the end of the day the brigade line ran west-south-west to east-north-east some four and a half miles south-east of Courtrai. Next day the advance to the Scheldt was taken up by another brigade and the 17th and 18th Battalions went into billets on the outskirts of Courtrai, in whose Grande Place their bands played on 26th October, to the huge joy of the inhabitants. 18TH BN. 17TH BN.

The previous day the battalions had moved up again, to the vicinity of Avelghem, close to the northern bank of the Scheldt. At 5 a.m. on 26th October the 17th Battalion attacked in a north-easterly direction, in conjunction with active patrolling and probing by the 18th, who were on their left. Strong opposition was soon met but was vigorously dealt with. Second-Lieutenant H. R. E. Irving went ahead of his platoon to reconnoitre and came upon a German machine-gun post. He shot one man and, in spite of heavy fire, succeeded in taking three prisoners. Outflanking was needed in many cases and in this Second-Lieutenant W. D. Stott showed skill; he too attacked a machine-gun post that was holding up the attack, killed its team with his runner's rifle and captured the gun. An advance of about two hundred yards was made, but no further progress was possible in face of the heavy fire of artillery, trench mortars and machine guns which poured into the battalion's position, particularly from the south side of the Scheldt. An urgent message reporting the situation was sent to battalion headquarters, but no answer was received. Thereupon Private A. Ward volunteered to take the message and succeeded in getting through with it and bringing back a reply, though he had to run the gauntlet of snipers and machine guns all the way. By 12 noon the situation of the forward troops had become impossible and they were ordered to withdraw to their original positions, having lost thirty casualties and taken three prisoners. Meanwhile, the 18th Battalion had been encountering similar difficulties on the left, largely owing to heavy fire from the high ground about Tieghem, and little progress could be made. 17TH BN. 18TH BN.

17TH BN. Two days later, Serjeant F. Sweeney, of the 17th, led out a patrol in a determined effort to knock out two machine guns which were sweeping his company's front. On 29th October he carried out a still more daring exploit. He disguised himself as a civilian and went through the enemy's lines in order to find out the exact location of the machine guns opposite his company. He visited several farms and brought back most valuable information about the enemy's dispositions. During the day the battalion was able to advance its line a distance of one thousand yards.

There now followed a remarkable action which Brigadier-General J. W. Sandilands, C.M.G., D.S.O., of the 104th Infantry Brigade, described as its finest achievement during the war. The French on the left of the 35th Division were meeting much opposition in front of Audenarde. It was therefore decided that the British should attack along the left bank of the Scheldt so as to threaten the enemy's lines of communications and cause him to fall back from in front of the French. This plan involved the 104th Brigade not only in a still further change of direction to the left but in what on the face of things seemed a highly dangerous flank movement of about 7,000 yards across ground dominated by the Germans from the south bank of the Scheldt. The advance was, however, to be covered by an almost unique weight of artillery: guns and howitzers of every sort and large quantities of smoke shell were prepared; and the Germans, enfiladed by heavy pieces at a range of three thousand to four thousand yards, some of them being even in action at Avelghem within one thousand yards of their outposts, were blasted off the bank of the river, leaving dozens of machine guns, and completely blinded during the attack which opened in dangerously clear weather early on the morning of 31st October, with the 19th Durham Light Infantry (Major B. C. H. Keenlyside, Lancashire Fusiliers) on the right close to the river, the 17th Lancashire Fusiliers (Major G. Mackereth, M.C.) in the centre and the 18th Lancashire Fusiliers (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jewels, D.S.O., M.C.) on the left.

17TH BN. The 17th advanced at 5.25 a.m. with "Z" Company (Lieutenant M. D. Walker, M.C.) on the right, "W" Company (Captain H. G. Leaver, M.C.) on the left, "Y" Company (Lieutenant J. Galbreath), in support on the right and "X" Company (Lieutenant J. K. B. Crawford) in support on the left. Considerable machine-gun and artillery fire was met from the outset; but outflanking tactics with Lewis guns were successful in putting the machine guns out of action. Private A. Ward, who had shown such gallantry in the affair of 26th October, was wounded at an early stage but insisted on going with his company till it reached its first objective, the Waermarde Tieghem road, which was captured by the time laid down in orders. At 6.46 a.m. patrols were pushed out to a line in front, in conformity with the moves of the barrage. The attack was resumed at 8.49 a.m. by "Y" and "X" Companies. Once again opposition was met, if anything more fierce than before: once again it was successfully overcome. The Germans made a contribution to their own dis-

comfiture by using tracer ammunition, which gave away the position of their guns. The battalion gained its final objective north of Kerkhove by 9.55 a.m. A redistribution was then effected; and in the early afternoon patrols of "X" Company pushed on another thousand yards and reached Eeuwhook and Meesche, south of Elseghem. The battalion had lost 91 all ranks and had taken 150 prisoners, 30 machine guns, and a trench mortar. Two motor ambulances, subsequently put to good use in the 35th Division, were captured in Kerkhove: credit for these trophies was disputed between the 17th Lancashire Fusiliers and the 19th Durham Light Infantry; but, as the latter were commanded by Major Keenlyside of the XX (who was awarded the Military Cross for his skill and his pluck in continuing at his post though wounded), honours may be regarded as even so far as the Lancashire Fusiliers are concerned.

18TH BN.

The 18th Battalion attacked ten minutes after its sister unit, "for the eighth time since 28th September." Some stiff fighting followed. Serjeant F. Sweeney again distinguished himself: he was wounded through the shoulder whilst leading a rush on a German machine gun, but continued to lead and inspire his men till it was silenced. Another hostile machine gun which was holding up part of the attack was most gallantly dealt with by Lance-Corporal R. Clark, who rushed forward and tried to bring his Lewis gun into action against it. His gun almost immediately jammed. Nothing daunted, he snatched a rifle and bayonet from one of his section and charged the Germans alone, capturing the gun and its team. His action enabled the rest of his company to push on and reach its objective. Machine guns were not, however, the only obstacles. Captain E. Mitchell's company was confronted by a German battery firing at point-blank range. Mitchell, whose courage and skilful example were conspicuous throughout the day, rushed the gun position, captured the pieces and killed or took prisoner the whole of its crew. With such dash, it is not surprising that the battalion had gained all its objectives, to a depth of some 4,000 yards from its starting line, by 11 a.m., though exploitation proved to be impossible as the division on the left had been held up and could not draw level. The unit's losses had been the heaviest in the brigade, but its booty was substantial: 125 prisoners, 3 field guns, a listening set, 3 anti-tank rifles, 18 machine guns, 4 trench mortars and 3 message dogs, of which one was a German sheep-dog and another a heavy bull-terrier mastiff.

The line finally established by the brigade ran from Kerkhove to a point three-quarters of a mile east of Caster and thence to the Courtrai–Audenarde railway about a mile north-north-east of Caster. Congratulations poured in. The Army Commander, General Sir Herbert Plumer, came himself to divisional headquarters to express his appreciation of the overwhelming success of an operation in whose outcome (it was learnt later) not too much confidence had been placed by higher authority. The decorations awarded to the

17th and 18th Battalions for the Battle of Courtrai included the following :—

Bar to Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jewels, D.S.O., M.C., 18th.

Bar to Military Cross

Captain C. S. Atkinson, M.C., 17th.

Military Cross

Captain E. Mitchell, 18th.
Lieutenant P. J. McKevitt, 17th.
Second-Lieutenant A. E. V. Gallon, 18th.
Second-Lieutenant A. C. Stephenson, 17th.
Lieutenant C. Huntly, 17th.
Lieutenant F. A. D. Roberts, 18th.
Second-Lieutenant H. R. E. Irving, 17th.
Second-Lieutenant W. D. Stott, 17th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Serjeant F. Sweeney, 18th.
Private A. Walmsley, 17th.
Lance-Corporal R. Clark, 18th.
Private A. Ward, 17th.

Bar to Military Medal

Serjeant A. E. Barrett, M.M., 18th.
Serjeant H. Rooke, M.M., 17th.
Corporal J. M. Mullen, M.M., 18th.
Serjeant J. R. Hackett, M.M., 18th.
Serjeant F. Tetlow, M.M., 17th.
Private L. G. Briers, M.M., 17th.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major C. W. Chamberlain, 17th.
Company Serjeant-Major G. Chapman, 18th.
Serjeant R. H. Garnett, 17th.
Serjeant C. Parsons, 17th.
Lance-Serjeant J. Brown, 18th.
Corporal J. Donagher, 18th.
Corporal W. Lill, 18th.
Lance-Corporal J. Francis, 17th.
Lance-Corporal W. O'Brien, 18th.
Private P. Broughton, 17th.
Private J. Critchley, 17th.
Private J. M. Gregson, 17th.
Private C. B. Hodgkiss, 17th.
Private S. Jones, 18th.
Private R. T. Kershaw, 17th.
Private C. Lane, 17th.
Private A. Mole, 17th.
Private J. Pendell, 17th.
Private E. Plant, 18th.
Private W. J. Riddick, 17th.
Private W. Robson, 18th.
Private J. W. Taylor, 18th.
Private G. Wilkie, 17th.
Private I. Winstanley, 17th.
Serjeant H. J. Hartnell, 18th.
Serjeant F. J. Rowlands, 17th.
Corporal F. W. Button, 18th.
Corporal J. Keight, 18th.
Corporal T. Pemberton, 17th.
Lance-Corporal S. Kendall, 17th.
Drummer R. Howarth, 17th.
Private W. Connor, 17th.
Private C. P. Grey, 17th.
Private H. Hilliard, 18th.
Private J. Holden, 17th.
Private H. Kelly, 18th.
Private H. T. Knowles, 17th.
Private J. E. Mincher, 17th.
Private R. J. Monks, 18th.
Private A. Pickup, 18th.
Private H. Prince, 18th.
Private R. E. Roberts, 18th.
Private E. Spear, 17th.
Private W. Thomas, 17th.
Private W. Williams, 17th.
Private T. Woodhead, 18th.

The 1st Battalion's Last Battle

1st Bn. Farther to the north the 29th Division had meanwhile been following up its successes near Ypres between 28th September and 2nd October. The 1st Battalion, after a few days' rest in the ramparts and cellars of Ypres, moved into the line again at Ledeghem railway station in expectation of being called upon to attack but returned to Ypres on 10th October. Three days later, however, it entrained at Manners Junction, near Ypres, and after a slow, cold and wet journey by light railway arrived at Waterdamhoek (about a mile south of Moorslede), whence it moved across country to assembly

positions between the Menin–Roulers road and the village of Ledeghem. In spite of intense darkness at first and much German shelling, the battalion reached its place without casualties by 10.30 p.m.

For the first part of the 29th Division's operations on 14th October, the battalion was to be in reserve, except "B" Company (Captain P. D. W. Dunn, M.C.), which was detailed to "mop up" Ledeghem after its capture by the 2nd Royal Fusiliers. Zero was at 5.35 a.m., when that unit advanced into Ledeghem. With its first wave went Dunn, a lance-corporal, Private P. Staton (Dunn's runner, an ex-member of the 23rd Battalion, four feet eleven inches in height, with the heart of a lion, especially at night) and another man. Under heavy shell fire and through gas, they moved down the main street of the village and captured 40 Germans from a "pill-box." Moving on, they took another 26 prisoners. By the end of this phase of the action they had taken a total of 74 Germans and 5 machine guns. All this had been achieved in dense fog, made thicker by a smoke barrage which had been arranged in order to blind hostile machine-gun posts. By 7 a.m. "B" Company had fulfilled its task, losing only 13 men in the process.

Meanwhile, the rest of the battalion had moved off at 6.35 a.m., marching on a compass bearing owing to the fog and smoke, with officers carrying their revolver in one hand and their compass in the other. So intent was the Commanding Officer on his compass bearing that, before he knew his peril, he found himself floundering in a very wet and cold moat! The advance went well; and by 9.20 a.m. the battalion had reached its first objective, the line of the road, about two miles east of Ledeghem, running north-north-east from Moorsele towards Winkel St. Eloi. Attempts to advance thence were frustrated by machine-gun and trench-mortar fire from the flanks. But much good work had been done, especially by Second-Lieutenant F. C. Morgan, who was in command of the battalion snipers and set a splendid example by his gallantry and coolness in moving about at all times without any regard to the severity of the German fire. His actions enabled several machine guns to be outflanked. At 11 a.m. orders were received for a reorganization which led to the battalion taking over the whole of the brigade sector, with "A" Company (Captain C. Wedgwood, M.C.) on the right, "D" (Lieutenant J. C. B. Harris, M.C.) on the left and "C" (Second-Lieutenant T. Rochester) in close support, Dunn's "B" Company, which had by now rejoined the battalion, being kept in reserve. The battalion was to hold the line it had helped to gain and to conform to the movements of the brigades on its flanks. As the unit on the left advanced at 12.30 p.m., Lieutenant-Colonel Modera ordered the battalion forward. But progress proved difficult owing to machine-gun and light artillery fire. Some advance was, however, made and by nightfall the battalion had reached a line one thousand yards short of its second objective, which was the Salines–Steenbeck road, east of Ledeghem

Its losses had been 3 officers and 83 other ranks ; its captures were about 120 prisoners, 4 4.2-inch guns, a signal wagon and several machine guns ; and its rewards were :—

Distinguished Service Order

Captain P. D. W. Dunn, M.C.

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant F. C. Morgan.

Bar to Military Medal

Serjeant W. Ashworth, M.M. Serjeant A. Braithwaite, M.M.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major A. E. Miner.
Serjeant J. H. Fox.
Private A. Curry.
Private A. Oseman.
Private J. Shackleton.
Company Serjeant-Major F. Clements.
Lance-Corporal H. Haberfield.
Private F. E. Mason.
Private J. Ricks.
Private J. W. Williams.

With the exception of a comparatively small share in an attack between St. Louis and Ooteghem, on the way from the River Lys to the River Scheldt, on 22nd October, the fight near Ledeghem proved to be the last in which the 1st Battalion took part.

A Fine Finish by the 23rd Battalion

23rd Bn. The youngest of the family, the 23rd Battalion (Major J. P. M. Ingham, D.S.O., in temporary command), was not left out of the chase. Having enjoyed a fortnight's rest after its mixed fortunes at Pont de Nieppe at the end of September, it moved into support behind the line at Armentières on 13th October. Next day there were signs that the enemy intended to retire—not a surprising decision in view of the events farther north which have been described in the last few pages. The 23rd Battalion advanced through the front-line troops and the old British front line east of Armentières on 16th October and tried to gain touch with the Germans, who were by then withdrawing rapidly. By the early morning of 18th October the battalion reached Croix-au-Bois, some three miles north-east of Armentières, to find cross-roads and bridges blown up. After a day's rest, the battalion was off again and made Wambrechies, three miles north of Lille, at midday. A delay ensued as the canal bridge had been destroyed and the troops had to get down to water level by step-ladders, cross on rafts and clamber up the steep bank on the other side, encouraged by crowds of cheering children who lined the towpath. But by 2 p.m. the battalion, tired and hungry, moved on again through enthusiastic demonstrations of gratitude from more of the freed inhabitants, reaching Croix, a mile or so south-west of Roubaix, after another difficult canal crossing the same evening. They went into support at Holden Works, Croix. There, to their great disappointment, they were squeezed out by other formations more suited to rapid and strenuous pursuit, though they took their share in holding the line during

pauses in the advance. While they were so doing on the bank of the River Scheldt near Warcoing, Captain T. Cowcher earned the Military Cross for a deed of gallantry for which he was recommended for a Victoria Cross. He saw a British aeroplane come down in flames on the German side of the river. The observer and pilot had both been wounded. The former crawled out of the wreckage and was trying to carry the pilot to a place of safety when Cowcher saw that he was walking towards some houses occupied by the Germans. He shouted to them to come in his direction and swam across the river to help them. The Germans, who had up till then kept silent, then opened fierce rifle and machine-gun fire. But Cowcher refused to turn back and succeeded in bringing the two wounded airmen back to our lines.

Real Mobile Warfare at Last

2nd/5th Battalion

By now the British Armies were moving forward along their whole front—in some places very rapidly, as the 2nd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O.) showed near Lille. Returning to the line on 12th October, it moved on 16th October to the hamlet of Lattre, north-east of Wavrin, with parties of the Royal Artillery, tunnellers and bridging experts of the Royal Engineers, and machine-gunners, in readiness for an advance. The enemy were holding the line of the Haute Deule Canal but began to withdraw during the night of 16th/17th October. Second-Lieutenant J. Ferguson of the 2nd/5th followed close on their heels with a patrol of eleven men and established a bridgehead behind which a bridge was put up for his company to cross. He then pushed on to the Seclin Canal, where he found a covering party of Germans: these he promptly attacked and forced to retire, enabling this obstacle also to be bridged and his company to establish itself on the north-east bank. The battalion's advanced guard then passed through, under the command of Captain J. R. Bodington, M.C., who acted with such energy and skill over a wide area that the German rear-guards were driven from position to position. At 5 a.m. the remaining companies advanced, meeting only a few rifle shots. By nightfall they had advanced 17,000 yards on a 5,000 yards front and had freed ten villages, where for the first time they met civilians who greeted them with flags and flowers. Their advance had not, however, been a mere route march: for every cross-road was blown up by the Germans, sometimes as the 2nd/5th arrived, and telegraph poles had been cut through so that they fell across the road. And it was so rapid that they found themselves with an exposed flank of some 6,000 yards. Towards the end of the day, opposition was met at Lesquin, two and a half miles south-east of Lille. A machine gun firing from a house was attacked and its team driven out. The enemy received a rude shock here; and a lorry full of his troops was only just able to make a crater in the

2ND/5TH BN.

road and escape from the eastern outskirts as the British opened fire on them from the centre of the village. Here, too, a German 77-millimetre field gun fired on our troops at point-blank range, but was forced to withdraw at the gallop. A line was finally established east of Lesquin.

On instructions, Second-Lieutenant J. Wake pushed forward with a patrol late in the evening to ascertain the position ahead. He reached Sanghin, five miles south-east of Lille ; the inhabitants told him that there were still a number of Germans in the village. He left his patrol and went on himself to reconnoitre. On approaching the château, he met and killed a German ; but at the house itself he found the Germans in some force—about forty infantry with some Uhlans, on whom he inflicted casualties. He then rejoined his men, established a post in the village for the night, and regained touch with the battalion at dawn, returning to it when another battalion passed through to take up the running. The battalion headquarters of the 2nd 5th were so tired at the end of the day of 17th October that they unwittingly settled down for the night in a village which lay between the British and German positions—and slept peacefully in the bliss of ignorance.

After two days' rest the battalion advanced from Cysoing at 8.45 a.m. on 20th October and at 10 a.m. attacked through the outpost line, with the two ridges west of Tournai as its objectives. It was treated to considerable shelling throughout the day. But there was little opposition during the first stage, thanks largely to the skill and initiative of junior leaders, such as Second-Lieutenant E. G. V. Righton, who commanded the advanced platoon of his company and hustled the enemy rear-guards out of every position they tried to occupy. Once he was in danger of being cut off ; but he immediately organized an attack, himself mounting a Lewis gun in the open under machine-gun fire, with the result that he was able to push on. By 11 a.m. the whole of the first objective had been taken ; and half an hour later the southern part of the second objective had been taken, including Froidmont, where a complete divisional ammunition column of one hundred vehicles was captured. On the left, however, considerable resistance came from the ridge immediately west of Tournai. Attacks against the enemy positions here were organized during the night. "B" Company (Captain L. A. Wilson) charged a strong point called "The Reservoir," between Tournai and Froidmont. Here Serjeant F. W. Harrison, M.M., did gallant work. He led his platoon forward under cover of a thick mist to take up an advanced position. Having reached it, he went on with only one man to do a reconnaissance of the ground in front. He suddenly came upon a German machine gun about eight yards away : without a moment's hesitation he rushed the position, capturing the gun and its crew of five. Meanwhile "D" Company (Captain H. Waterhouse) had been held up by a strong point centred round a farm. Serjeant W. F. Rowe made several attempts with his section to outflank it, but its machine-gun and rifle fire was

too heavy for them. Later in the night he took out a patrol and discovered that the Germans had skilfully hidden a machine-gun post in a haystack. As he could not get at the post to attack it, he set fire to the stack and opened a brisk fire on the two officers and fifty other ranks who emerged from it, hitting a number of them. This action enabled not only "D" Company to gain its objective but a unit on the flank to get forward and gain touch with the 2nd/5th. By dawn all objectives had been taken: the battalion had advanced 7,000 yards in two days at a cost of under thirty casualties and had covered twelve miles in four days.

After a few days' rest the battalion was again in the outpost line near Tournai. At 1.30 p.m. on 25th October it launched a small attack on a factory at Ere, a mile and a quarter south-west of that town, where a German strong point was situated. This was taken, with three prisoners; but soon after, a company of Germans counter-attacked and retook the building. The 2nd/5th men were cut off and had to fight their way out, with a loss of thirty all ranks.

The following honours were awarded for the period 16th to 25th October:—

Distinguished Service Order

Captain J. R. Bodington, M.C.

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant J. Ferguson. Second-Lieutenant E. G. V. Righton.
Second-Lieutenant J. Wake.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Serjeant F. W. Harrison, M.M. Serjeant W. F. Rowe.

Military Medal

Corporal J. Barker. Lance-Corporal W. T. Brierley.
Lance-Corporal J. P. Ward. Private W. E. Cox.
Private S. Kay. Private A. Ralphson.
Private A. Warhurst.

The Last Round

1st/5th, 2nd/5th, 6th, 1st/7th, 1st/8th, 10th, 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th Battalions

The Battle of the Sambre

10th, 15th and 16th Battalions

By now it was evident that the German Empire was beaten. The preoccupation of the Allied higher command was to prevent the enemy from making such a stand during the winter months as would enable him to negotiate armistice terms as an equal. It was therefore decided to launch a big and decisive attack on a wide front early in November, 1918, with the object of piercing his centre, disrupting his communications with the north and south, and turning his withdrawal into a rout. One French and three British Armies were to be used to drive towards the general line Hirson–Maubeuge–Mons.

The Sambre–Oise Canal; and the last two V.Cs.

"SAMBRE"

15th and 16th Battalions

At the end of October the right of the British line was close to the Sambre–Oise Canal but was not right up to it in all places. The clearing of the remaining German elements on its western bank and the forcing of the canal itself were therefore the first task to be accomplished in that quarter. The canal was a formidable obstacle, being seventy-five feet wide from bank to bank and thirty-five to forty feet wide at water level except at the locks, where it was narrower. In November, 1918, it had an average depth of seven feet of water and was everywhere unfordable; all bridges had been demolished or partly broken. The Germans had provided themselves with further protection by flooding the low ground on both sides of the canal and turning much of it into swamps, which were also fed by small streams, particularly near Ors. The higher ground on the west of the canal consisted largely of small orchards and paddocks, enclosed by almost impenetrable hedges, which restricted observation and made the keeping of direction difficult. To the east of the water, the country was a series of valleys and ridges, rather like an English dairy-farming countryside, with much wire and many hedges.

The main offensive, involving at the outset the forcing of the water obstacle just described, was timed for 4th November, a memorable date: for on that day five Victoria Crosses were won by members of a single brigade group, including an officer and a serjeant of the XX. It was decided that preliminary operations must be carried out to obtain complete control of all ground on the west of the canal, the most important point being the Happegarbes spur which runs north-west to south-east 2,000 yards west-south-west of Landrecies and commands the canal as far as Catillon, nearly three miles away. The capture of this feature was entrusted to the 15th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. R. G. Alban, D.S.O., Liverpool Regiment), which moved into the line in the low ground west of the spur and astride the Le Cateau–Landrecies road on 30th October. At 6 a.m. on 2nd November the battalion attacked on a three-company front, supported by two tanks, of which only one survived to reach the objective. For strong resistance was met from the outset and even the forming-up had to be carried out under heavy artillery and machine-gun fire. Lieutenant C. Lees showed great coolness and skill in handling his company at this difficult stage. The battalion fought its way slowly forward. Serjeant J. Clarke, who was in command of a platoon, in particular showed great determination in leading his men on; and when they were held up by heavy machine-gun fire, he rushed forward through a thick, strongly-held hedge, captured four machine guns in succession and bayoneted the crews single-handed. A little later, in spite of the heavy casualties sustained by his platoon, he led the survivors

to the capture of three more machine guns and many prisoners; and later still, when his platoon was again held up by German machine guns, he led a tank against them over very exposed ground and secured their disposal. Equally determined was Second-Lieutenant J. Cramer, who, although wounded shortly after the attack began, refused to leave his men and gallantly led them forward; they suffered heavily, but he kept on till he reached the objective though by then he had only one section left. Another platoon commander who refused to be daunted by opposition or losses was Second-Lieutenant T. H. Horspool: he led his men with great ability right up to the objective. Mention must also be made of Private A. G. Bunce who, finding himself the only survivor of his Lewis-gun team when his platoon was held up at a strong point, took his weapon forward to a position from which he could bring fire to bear on the enemy to such effect that his platoon was able to rush the position. After a struggle the spur was captured with sixty-two prisoners; the casualties had not been all on one side, and many Germans were killed. But many still remained: and at 9 a.m., they counter-attacked, though unsuccessfully. Five hours later the Germans again counter-attacked under a heavy barrage which included many gas shells. They worked their way through gaps in the line and got in behind the centre and the right of it. Casualties had been heavy; and the line formed a sharp salient on the right. Lieutenant-Colonel Alban, who had been well served with information throughout the day by the reports sent back from the front line by his intelligence officer, Lieutenant R. C. B. Jones, took up the reserve company through heavy fire to fill the gap which had developed towards the centre. But further adjustments proved necessary and the end of the day saw the battalion back at its starting line. During the afternoon "B" and "C" Companies and a platoon of "D" Company of the 16th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. N. Marshall, M.C., Irish Guards) were sent to be in close support of the 15th owing to their losses. 16TH BN.

The 15th Battalion made another attempt on the Happegarbes spur the next day, 3rd November, advancing at 6.15 a.m. under a heavy barrage. Once again Lees was conspicuous for the skilful forming up and handling of his company. Once again Clarke showed great gallantry and captured many prisoners. Cramer, too, showed the same determined bravery as on the day before and won through with only one section left. Thanks to such efforts, the objective was gained by 7 a.m. Clarke was at once busy skilfully organizing his part of the line in such a way that it was able to withstand the Germans soon after. For the enemy, taking advantage of the long gaps in the line caused by the heavy casualties, again filtered in between and behind the centre and right companies. Lieutenant-Colonel Alban took up his reserve company but, though it succeeded in gaining touch with the companies on its flanks, it could not force the enemy back. Worse was to come. At 1 p.m., after a very heavy bombardment which contained much gas and 15TH BN.

which blew in every machine-gun and infantry post except one, the Germans attacked in great strength against the battalion's right flank from the north-east. Severe struggles followed. At one point Horspool's post was surrounded, but he succeeded in driving the enemy off after heavy fighting. But they pressed on and managed to place themselves between battalion headquarters and the spur. For a time the headquarters were almost surrounded ; but the battalion staff put up a gallant resistance and kept the Germans at bay till dusk, when the enemy were finally driven off to the east, speeded by a local counter-attack on the right flank. The battalion's casualties had, however, again been heavy and it was deemed best not to try to hold the spur during the night, particularly as it was felt that the bigger events of the next day should solve this problem.

For on 4th November the great attack on the wide front was to be launched. The 16th Battalion, in the centre of the brigade, was to cross the canal by a bridge to be erected by the Royal Engineers about 1,500 yards north-east of Ors and advance with its left flank on the canal and its right in touch with the 2nd Manchester Regiment to the final objective, the Guise–Landrecies road. On the left the 15th Battalion were to clear the Happegarbes spur and make good the west bank of the canal.

16TH BN. At 5.30 a.m. on 4th November the 16th Battalion moved to its forming-up line in an orchard close to the canal and lay down with all ranks facing the latter. A heavy barrage of artillery and machine guns opened at 5.45 a.m. Five minutes later the companies of the 16th dashed up to the bank of the canal, Second-Lieutenant P. G. Horsler greatly distinguishing himself, and opened fire to cover the Royal Engineers while they put up bridges. The Sappers completed their task in half an hour in the face of great difficulties. As soon as the bridge to be used by the 16th was ready, Second-Lieutenant C. J. Stapley was one of the first to cross it, though under intense machine-gun fire. But as Captain H. C. Pemberton began to cross it, the floats at the enemy's end of the bridge broke loose. By now heavy machine-gun fire was being directed by the enemy at the bridges. In spite of it, Pemberton and Stapley succeeded in repairing it ; and Second-Lieutenant G. H. Potts and three men were able to get across it before it was again broken by shell fire. The battalion was thus held up. Lieutenant-Colonel Marshall at once came forward and organized parties to repair the bridge. The first party formed were soon all killed or wounded. But such was the inspiration of Marshall's example that volunteers sprang forward to take their place. He stood on the bank under intense fire and with a complete disregard of his own safety, encouraging them and helping in the work. In spite of the German fire, the repairs to the bridge were completed. Marshall tried to rush across at the head of the company waiting to cross. He was shot through the head and instantly killed.

Losses had been heavy throughout the battalion and the first task of the second-in-command, Captain J. B. Dunn, M.C., on coming up to take over command was to reorganize the depleted

companies. Soon after 8.30 a.m. orders were received that no further attempts were to be made at the scene of Marshall's glorious gallantry but that the battalion was to cross the canal by a bridge put up by another brigade at Ors. Dunn led the remnants of the 16th across there under heavy fire but without incident, and the battalion began to move in a north-easterly direction to regain its proper place in the line. It met with stiff resistance from German machine-gun nests and snipers, particularly from its exposed left flank. But Lieutenant J. W. Lewis, M.C., the battalion's Lewis-gun officer, saved many casualties by bringing his guns into a favourable position from which he was able to beat down the hostile fire. Horsler again showed great skill and gallantry in leading his company and dealt with a number of centres of resistance. In one company all the officers became casualties except Second-Lieutenant R. G. Boden, who at once assumed command and displayed valuable courage and initiative in working round the flanks of several machine-gun nests. Potts also led his company with great skill and bravery. The result was the capture of all the objectives, so that at dusk the battalion had consolidated in depth with its left on the canal bank and its right in touch with the 2nd Manchester Regiment on the Ors–Landrecies road. But the cost had been heavy: eleven officers had been killed or wounded and the battalion could only muster about one hundred rifles. Nevertheless it continued its task next day, 5th November, mopping up the ground east of the canal and advancing to La Folie, a hamlet half-way between Ors and Landrecies, where another brigade passed through. During this advance the battalion captured 8 field guns, 26 machine guns, a large store of shells and some transport.

15TH BN

It remains to describe the part taken by the 15th Battalion in this battle. At 5.45 a.m. on 4th November it advanced with two companies of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and two tanks, under a heavy and uncomfortably accurate German defensive barrage, towards its objective, the west bank of the canal. Serjeant Clarke again played a prominent part in making the advance possible. Though he was faced with heavy fire from the canal bank, he rushed forward through the barrage with a Lewis-gun team, brought the gun into action and silenced the enemy's fire. His company were then able to push forward and reach the canal. The left of the battalion had to work methodically through the village of Happegarbes, clearing up strong points and machine-gun nests. Once more Private A. G. Bunce was conspicuous for his gallantry. He was badly wounded early in the day but insisted on carrying on single-handed with his Lewis gun in complete disregard for the heavy fire through which he advanced. Cramer also showed the same cool and calm bearing that had been so valuable in the previous days' fighting; and for the third time he reached his objective with only one section left. Horspool, too, repeated his good work of the earlier fighting: on this occasion he took over command of the remnants of three companies and handled them with such skill and

gallantry that he not only reached the objective but inflicted severe punishment on the enemy. Second-Lieutenant J. W. Nicholson did similar good work: when his company commander was hit he took over and led the men with skill and determination to all their objectives in spite of heavy losses. During its advance the battalion captured a battery of high-velocity guns, over two hundred prisoners and many machine guns. Having achieved its object, the battalion received orders to send two companies round by the left to cross the canal by two footbridges which had been put up by the 25th Division and, by coming up on its right, to complete its bridgehead covering Landrecies. By dusk these companies were holding a position facing south with their right on the canal one thousand yards south-west of Landrecies and their left in touch with the 25th Division near Pont à Beaumetz, one thousand yards south of the town. Later the whole battalion came round to the same area, being skilfully led by Lieutenant-Colonel Alban. During the night the battalion pivoted with its left on the 25th Division's right and advanced towards the Guise–Landrecies road, where it established touch with the 2nd Manchester Regiment early the following morning.

The two battalions had been well served in the matter of administration. The aid post of the 15th Battalion, of which Lieutenant A. V. Pegge, R.A.M.C., its medical officer, was in charge, came under very heavy shell fire and was also gassed at intervals. As we have seen, the battalion's casualties were very heavy: but he carried on his task in the open, working unceasingly and with untiring energy. If it had not been for his personal example and devotion to duty under fire, there would have been a complete stoppage in the evacuation of the wounded of the battalion. To his colleague of the 16th Battalion, Lieutenant E. R. Batho, R.A.M.C., it was equally due that the evacuation of its wounded was rapid. He dressed wounded under heavy shell fire and established his aid post close to the line, where, although very exposed, he dealt with a great number of cases, working for many hours without respite and under great pressure. And for the hale, the transport officer of the 15th Battalion performed wonders: Second-Lieutenant G. Elding kept his battalion supplied with rations, ammunition and all its other needs throughout its most exacting battle. In spite of heavy casualties amongst his drivers and their animals, he made three journeys a night along the Le Cateau–Landrecies road, which was receiving almost as much shelling as the forward areas; and, largely owing to the way in which his coolness and devotion to duty inspired his men, the battalion never wanted the essentials of war.

The honours awarded to the two Salford battalions were on the high level of their feats:—

Victoria Cross

Lieutenant-Colonel J. N. Marshall, M.C., 16th.
Serjeant J. Clarke, 15th.

Second Bar to Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. R. G. Alban, 15th.

Distinguished Service Order

Captain J. B. Dunn, M.C., 16th. Captain H. C. Pemberton, 16th.

Bar to Military Cross

Lieutenant J. W. Lewis, M.C., 16th.

Military Cross

Lieutenant E. R. Batho, R.A.M.C., 16th.
Lieutenant C. Lees, 15th.
Second-Lieutenant R. G. Boden, 16th.
Second-Lieutenant G. Elding, 15th.
Second-Lieutenant T. H. Horspool, 15th.
Second-Lieutenant G. H. Potts, 10th.
Lieutenant R. C. B. Jones, 15th.
Lieutenant A. V. Pegge, R.A.M.C., 15th.
Second-Lieutenant J. Cramer, 15th.
Second-Lieutenant P. G. Horsler, 16th.
Second-Lieutenant W. J. Nicholson, 15th.
Second-Lieutenant C. J. Stapley, 10th.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Private A. G. Bunce, 15th.

Bar to Military Medal

Serjeant J. W. Crinigan, M.M., 15th. Serjeant H. C. Meddings, M.M., 16th.
Corporal J. Wood, M.M., 15th.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major J. Bell, 16th.
Corporal H. F. Diprose, 16th.
Private W. Barton, 16th.
Private R. James, 15th.
Private I. Mitchell, 15th.
Private M. Sawdon, 16th.
Private J. Williams, 16th.
Serjeant J. H. Ashley, 15th.
Private H. Atkinson, 15th.
Private J. W. Harmer, 15th.
Private G. Marshall, 16th.
Private J. Moores, 16th.
Private J. Walsh, 16th.
Private J. Worrall, 15th.

Into the Forest of Mormal

"SAMBRE"

10th Battalion

While the stirring events just described were taking place, the 10th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. L. Torrens, D.S.O.) was contributing to the general advance, about six and a half miles to the north-north-west. Taking over a sector of the front line south-west of Louvignies on 2nd November, the battalion received verbal orders on the morning of the 3rd to advance that night to the Forest of Mormal and penetrate the enemy lines to a depth of about 2,000 yards, with the area round Futoy, 1,500 yards south-east of Louvignies, as its first objective. 10TH BN.

At 1 a.m. on 4th November the battalion assembled with two companies in front and two in close support. At 5.30 a.m., a quarter of an hour earlier than at Landrecies, the barrage opened. Four minutes later the attack began. Day broke at 5.45 a.m. but did

little to help the operations; for there was a heavy ground mist. Fortunately, the country was open in the early stages, though later on orchards enclosed by thick hedges, several isolated farms and the straggling village of Futoy had to be negotiated; the whole had been carefully prepared for defence with machine guns placed in the most unlikely positions under trees, in the middle of fields enfilading hedgerows, and in houses. The 10th Battalion met little opposition till it approached a copse west of the Louvignies–Englefontaine road. Under the skilful direction of Captain F. W. Brittnell, Lewis-gun and rifle fire was brought to bear on the garrison, and his two leading platoons rushed in and cleared the position. He then similarly dealt with a machine gun on the other side of the copse. Two officers, thirty-one other Germans and several machine guns were captured at this stage. At 6.5 a.m. the leading troops crossed the Louvignies–Englefontaine road and pushed on past La Motte Farm, half a mile south of Louvignies. But heavy machine-gun fire from the farm buildings held up the left support company. Lewis guns were promptly brought into action and a platoon detailed to rush the farm while the rest of the company moved to the far side of it, where they arrived in time to capture several of the enemy as they emerged from an outhouse. The platoon "mopped up" the main buildings and rejoined its company.

More rapid advance then became possible. Opposition from the western edge of Futoy was overcome by the leading companies, Brittnell again doing excellent work; and the clearing of the village was left to the support companies, a task completed by 7.50 a.m. German artillery fire was by now increasing in intensity: the rides and tracks of the forest, into which the advance had now penetrated, were severely searched. The increasing closeness of the country made it necessary to bring up three platoons of the left support company to keep touch in the centre of the battalion. Nevertheless the final objective was reached by 8 a.m. The work of consolidation was much interrupted by heavy shelling from the north and by desultory machine-gun fire from the direction of Pont à Vache, on the road running along the north-western face of the forest. Soon after, however, another brigade passed through and the battalion was left in reserve, moving into billets at Futoy that evening.

The decorations awarded for this operation were:

Military Cross

Captain F. W. Brittnell.

Military Medal

Company Serjeant-Major H. C. B. Smith.
Serjeant J. A. Gerrard.
Serjeant M. Shuttleworth.
Serjeant A. E. Smith.
Corporal J. Brearley.
Corporal H. Eccles.
Corporal J. T. Webster
Lance-Corporal M. T. Easterly
Private T. H. Edwards.
Private F. Howarth.
Private T. W. Vindin.

Through the Forest and on

1st/5th, 1st/7th and 1st/8th Battalions

The crossing of the River Sambre, in which the 15th and 16th Battalions took a full share, and the pressure exerted on the Germans still remaining on the western side of the river by attacks like that of the 10th Battalion just described, had convinced the enemy that he could no longer stand but must retreat. He did so, however, in good order on this part of the front and fought a series of rear-guard actions on suitable ground.

It fell to the 125th Infantry Brigade to dislodge the Germans from a good position which they had taken up east of the Sambre, south-west of the antiquated fortress of Maubeuge. The opening of what proved to be the last week of fighting found the brigade in comfortable billets at Solesmes, whence it moved on 6th November to Herbignies, three miles east of Le Quesnoy. It was ordered to march next day to Hargnies, close to the north-east of the Forest of Mormal; but after it had set out it was diverted to Petit Bavey, on the edge of the forest near Pont-sur-Sambre. The march through the forest was an ordeal: cold rain came down; there was bad congestion on the roads and tracks; and these were in the worst possible condition after four years of constant use, with trees blown across them, bogs on either side, blown-up culverts and craters so wide that it was often necessary to unload limbers and carry their contents round these obstacles to prevent the vehicles becoming stuck in the bog, as they almost certainly would have been if they had left the track fully loaded.

In the early hours of 8th November the brigade received orders to carry out later that day an operation whose first objective was the high ground south of Hautmont, including one of the outer forts of Maubeuge, the Fort d'Hautmont which stood up above the surrounding country and commanded a good view of it. The final objective was the high ground east of the Avesne–Maubeuge road to the south-east of Hautmont. The brigade was to advance in battle patrol formation, with the 1st/5th Lancashire Fusiliers on the right, the 1st/7th on the left, and the 1st/8th in support following the others at five hundred yards, distance and destined to push on as soon as the first objective had been taken and to encircle Hautmont from the east, covering all its exits with fire and inducing its garrison to surrender.

1ST/5TH BN.

The 1st/5th (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Castle, M.C.) led the way, moving off at 6.15 a.m. and crossing the Sambre north-east of Pont-sur-Sambre when the original plan to cross elsewhere had been abandoned owing to a delay in erecting a bridge. The brigade formed up by 11 a.m., with the two leading battalions on the main Paris–Brussels railway. Within the 1st/5th, "C" Company (Captain A. W. Haywood, M.C.) was on the right, "D" Company (Captain L. M. Dean) on the left, and "A" (Lieutenant W. Stringer) and "B" (Second-Lieutenant L. A. Caldwell, M.C.) Companies

behind. At 11.30 a.m. one platoon from each of the leading companies of the 1st/5th advanced to make good the line of the road beyond the railway. The remainder of the battalion followed and was on the first objective by 1.10 p.m. when "B" Company came up into line on the left of "D" for the next stage of the advance. This began at 1.40 p.m. Soon signs of opposition developed, in the form of machine-gun fire from Fort d'Hautmont. By 4.30 p.m. the resistance had stiffened on the whole front of the 1st/5th; and at 6.30 p.m. its "C" Company was held up by machine-gun fire from the Ferme de Forêt, a mile south-east of Hautmont, though this was cleared in a little over half an hour by the combined efforts of "B" and "C" Companies. The Battalion reached its final objective by 10 p.m.

1ST/7TH BN. Meanwhile, the 1st/7th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel T. J. Kelly, M.C., Manchester Regiment) had also advanced at 11.30 a.m. with "A" Company (Captain W. J. O'Bryen, M.C.) leading. On the capture of the first objective, "D" Company (Captain W. Kelly) on the right and "C" Company (Major C. Alderson, D.S.O.) on the left took up the running in a north-easterly direction through the Bois du Quesnoy (which lies to the south-west of Hautmont) with a view to swinging to the east at Fort Hautmont and reaching the final objective on the left of the 1st/5th. There was no opposition until the battalion passed through the southern outskirts of Hautmont, when machine-gun fire was opened from the direction of the Fort and the ridge north of it. Towards dusk, however, the opposition from this quarter died down and patrols were able to push on. At 9 p.m. "C" Company was ordered to outflank the positions still held by the enemy. They did so and the final objective was reached at about 3.30 a.m. on the 9th. Scouts and fighting patrols went out immediately to a distance of three miles without opposition. Twenty-two prisoners were taken during the operation and great quantities of booty, including eighty-four trucks of ammunition at Les Trieux (well ahead of the final objective), on each one of which an officer chalked the claim "Captured by the 7th L.F."

So well had the other two battalions of the brigade done their
1ST/8TH BN. work that the 1st/8th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel J. S. MacLeod) practically had a "walk-over," after an initial difficulty (costing many miles of marching) in finding a crossing over the Sambre. A patrol which entered Hautmont found that the town had been evacuated by the Germans, though a few snipers and machine guns remained on the eastern outskirts. They were soon dealt with and "A" (Captain D. G. Bird) and "B" (Captain D. Cumming, M.C.) Companies established posts east of the town with the remainder of the battalion in the centre of the town. Late that night the front
1ST/7TH AND 1ST/8TH BNS. east of Hautmont was taken over by the 1st/7th, "A" and "B" Companies of the 1st/8th forming a defensive flank facing north on the northern edge of Hautmont.

At 9 a.m. on 9th November, cavalry passed through to keep touch with the enemy. Later in the day the 1st/7th took over the

whole of the divisional front and held it as an outpost line; next day its task was extended to cover the whole corps front.

The Military Medal was awarded to the following for this final operation:—

Company Quartermaster-Serjeant W. Finn, 1st/7th.
Serjeant J. Grindrod, 1st/8th.
Serjeant W. Massey, 1st/8th.
Serjeant T. Thornton, 1st/8th.
Private E. Barlow, 1st/8th.
Private H. Newton, 1st/8th.
Serjeant W. Ashworth, 1st/8th
Serjeant R. C. Johnson, 1st/7th.
Serjeant J. Pickup, 1st/7th.
Corporal C. Axon, 1st/8th.
Private H. Dyson, 1st/8th.
Private J. W. Wood, 1st/8th.

The Rochdale Unit nearly rejoins its Old Companions

6th Battalion

By a happy coincidence, the 6th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel R. F. Gross, D.S.O.), the "descendant" of the 1st/6th Battalion which had been in the 125th Infantry Brigade during most of the war, was also engaged on the 8th and 9th November, a few miles south of its old friends, and on very much the same task—namely, ensuring that the Germans did not succeed in their original intention of making a stand on the Avesnes–Maubeuge road.

Late on 7th November the 6th Battalion relieved the 9th Devonshire Regiment in support near Dompierre and prepared to support an attack of the 5th Inniskilling Fusiliers next day. At 8.45 a.m. on 8th, a cold and wet day, battalion headquarters, "B" (Captain W. Vestey Jones) and "D" (Captain D. Pennington, M.C.) Companies moved to La Croisette Farm, a mile and a half north by west of Avesnes, while "A" Company (Captain R. A. V. White) on the right and "C" Company (Captain F. S. Ridler, M.C.) on the left followed the Inniskillings. At 11.20 a.m. White reported that the latter were held up by machine-gun fire and Ridler reported that the left company of that unit was held up in front of a small wood. The check was, however, only temporary and soon after midday the Inniskillings were across the Avesnes–Maubeuge road. "B" Company of the 6th then stepped up between "A" and "C" on the line of the road.

Orders were received for these companies to advance at 2 p.m. on the final objective, the high ground to the east of the main road. They set off at 2.30 p.m. But the German resistance was stiffening; and at 3.30 p.m. a message was received from Ridler that heavy machine-gun fire was coming from houses at La Cornelle, a hamlet on the Avesnes–Sars Poteries road half a mile east of its junction with the Avesnes–Maubeuge road, and that one of his platoons had suffered severe casualties and needed support. Help was speedily forthcoming from the 6th Dublin Fusiliers and the advance was resumed at this point. The other companies, however, had lost touch with battalion headquarters, and it was a long time before it was known that they had been stopped by machine-gun fire from in front and from the flanks and that, as their flanks were in the air,

they could not reach their objective. By 7.30 p.m. the three companies had established touch with each other on a line about three-quarters of a mile east of the main road, but were not in touch with any troops on the flanks, though contact with the Scottish Horse on the left was established two hours later.

At 3.15 a.m. on 9th November, a fine day with bright sunshine, word came that troops farther to the north had advanced a considerable distance without meeting any opposition and were anxious about the safety of their flank. A platoon of "C" Company, under Second-Lieutenant N. J. Gibson, was therefore ordered to advance along the Sars Poteries road to see if the enemy had withdrawn in that area too and if possible to establish a strong post on the eastern edge of the Bois de Beugnies, which lies to the north-west of the village of that name. "A" and "B" Companies were ordered to send out patrols under officers to a road which ran between that wood and the Bois de la Villette, west of Felleries. They all soon found that the enemy had withdrawn during the night; and they pushed on to their allotted points. A troop of the 12th Lancers, attached to the battalion, sent back word at the end of the morning that Felleries had been evacuated by the Germans who, after blowing up the level crossing over the railway there, were retiring across country. The battalion stayed on its appointed line for the rest of the day except that "D" Company established forward posts, in conjunction with a machine-gun company, near Beugnies. At 5 p.m. a South African brigade passed through and the 6th moved into billets in Beugnies.

Following up

17th and 18th Battalions

Although they were not involved in any fighting, brief mention should be made of the doings of the 17th (Lieutenant-Colonel G. MacKereth, M.C.) and 18th (Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jewels, D.S.O., M.C.) Battalions just before the Armistice, as they are to some extent linked with those of the 2nd 5th Battalion which are shortly to be told.

Summoned on 9th November from billets near Courtrai, these two battalions crossed the Scheldt at Berchem with a view to passing through another brigade and continuing the pursuit of the

18TH BN. rapidly retreating Germans. The 18th Battalion formed part of the advanced guard and moved off at 7 a.m. on 10th November. It met little opposition, except from mounted patrols, but a very enthusiastic welcome which often took the practical form of food, coffee and beer. By 5 p.m. the battalion had reached its objective, a line from Boekanter to Boschstraat, between Renaix and Grammont, after an advance of nearly eight miles. It sought to return the hospitality it received by arranging for its band to march with the transport and entertain the inhabitants at halts.

17TH BN. The 17th Battalion spent the 10th November in marching uneventfully with the main body from Berchem to Audenhove.

But next day it took over from the 18th Battalion the duty of advanced guard with orders to reach the line Everbecq–Kalenberge, three miles west of the River Dendre, and then if possible to push on and seize the crossings over the river at Grammont. It had under its command two platoons of cyclists, a battery of the Motor Machine Gun Corps and a battery of field guns. The battalion moved off at 7 a.m., with "X" Company (Captain J. K. B. Crawford) as its advanced guard, in two columns, and passed through the outpost line at 9 a.m. It had made good its first objective by 10.30 a.m.; and "X" Company at once moved on towards Grammont to support the cyclists who had gone ahead to secure the bridges. By 11 a.m., when the Armistice came into force, the cyclists had reached the bridges; but "X" Company had to content itself with reaching them after hostilities had ceased. The battalion not only captured eleven Germans who had been hiding in cellars, but received and looked after two hundred liberated British prisoners of war.

A Fine Finish

2nd/5th Battalion

The distinction of being the last battalion of the Regiment to be in action in the war fell to the 2nd/5th Battalion (Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Brighten, D.S.O.). It was pulled out of the line on 26th October to be the infantry of a column of all arms called "Stockwell's Force" after the commander of 164th Infantry Brigade, Brigadier-General C. I. Stockwell, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. Till 8th November the column trained for quick pursuit of the enemy. It concentrated immediately west of Tournai on 9th November; and at 1 p.m. on that day began its advance, the advanced guard being commanded by Major J. R. Bodington, M.C., of the 2nd/5th Battalion. The cavalry of the Force met German opposition about two miles west of Leuze. The Force halted for the night, two companies of the 2nd/5th providing the outposts. 2ND/5TH BN.

Next day, 10th November, the 9th Cavalry Brigade took over the duties of advanced guard and, after brushing aside slight opposition on each side of Leuze, succeeded in reaching the western outskirts of Ath before it was held up at 12.35 p.m. by strong resistance all along the line of the Dendre river and its canal. The 2nd/5th were ordered to attack and capture the bridges leading into Ath from the south-west. "C" (Captain C. V. Broadbent, M.C.) and "D" (Captain H. Waterhouse) Companies were detailed for the task, with "A" (Captain G. Walsh, M.C.) and "B" (Captain L. A. Wilson) in support. Orders for this operation were not given till so late that, to attack before dark, the battalion had to take the direct road over a skyline to its assembly position instead of a covered but longer way. It was spotted and came under heavy shelling and machine-gun fire which caused casualties to men and transport. Wilson showed conspicuous gallantry: though he was in full view of the Germans

and his horse was twice wounded under him, he coolly reorganized his men and led them to more sheltered positions. Captain K. E. Wheeler, the battalion intelligence officer, also distinguished himself by making repeated journeys through the shelling in his endeavours to establish a forward battalion headquarters. The attack was launched at 3 p.m.; but the leading companies were soon held up by machine-gun fire, and "A" and "B" fared no better when they later tried to take up the task, being met with fire from trench mortars with a flat trajectory. Parties succeeded, however, in working from house to house, largely under Waterhouse's leadership, till they gained the western bank of the canal. The battalion was then left on that line as outposts for the night with the intention that they should hold the enemy frontally while other troops attacked on the next day, though the 2nd/5th were ordered to try to force a crossing during the night or early in the morning. During the advance, Waterhouse and Wheeler had, under great difficulties, performed an act of mercy in putting in a place of safety a seriously wounded officer.

"C" and "D" Companies pressed the enemy all night. They found two iron bridges intact, on the two roads leading from Ath to Peruwelz south of the town. The northern of the two bridges was barricaded and mined. But, again under Waterhouse's skilful leadership, a Lewis gun was mounted in a house close to the bridge and by 7 a.m. the Germans driven from the latter before they were able to blow it up. The barricade was destroyed and the troops crossed into Ath. The Germans withdrew all along the line and were closely followed. They were hustled over a bridge on the eastern outskirts of the town without being given time to destroy it. Patrols of the battalion reached the high ground east of Ath soon after 8 a.m. At 10.15 a.m. orders were received that an armistice came into force at 11 a.m., when Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten announced the news to the overjoyed inhabitants of the town his battalion had freed.

The troops were ready for a rest. In eighty days they had covered fifty miles. In the final stages they covered considerable distances each day and found outposts at night. They carried their packs but kept up with mounted and more lightly equipped units without a man falling out. The 2nd/5th indeed ended the war as it began—marching long distances with full kit.

The following decorations were awarded for these operations :—

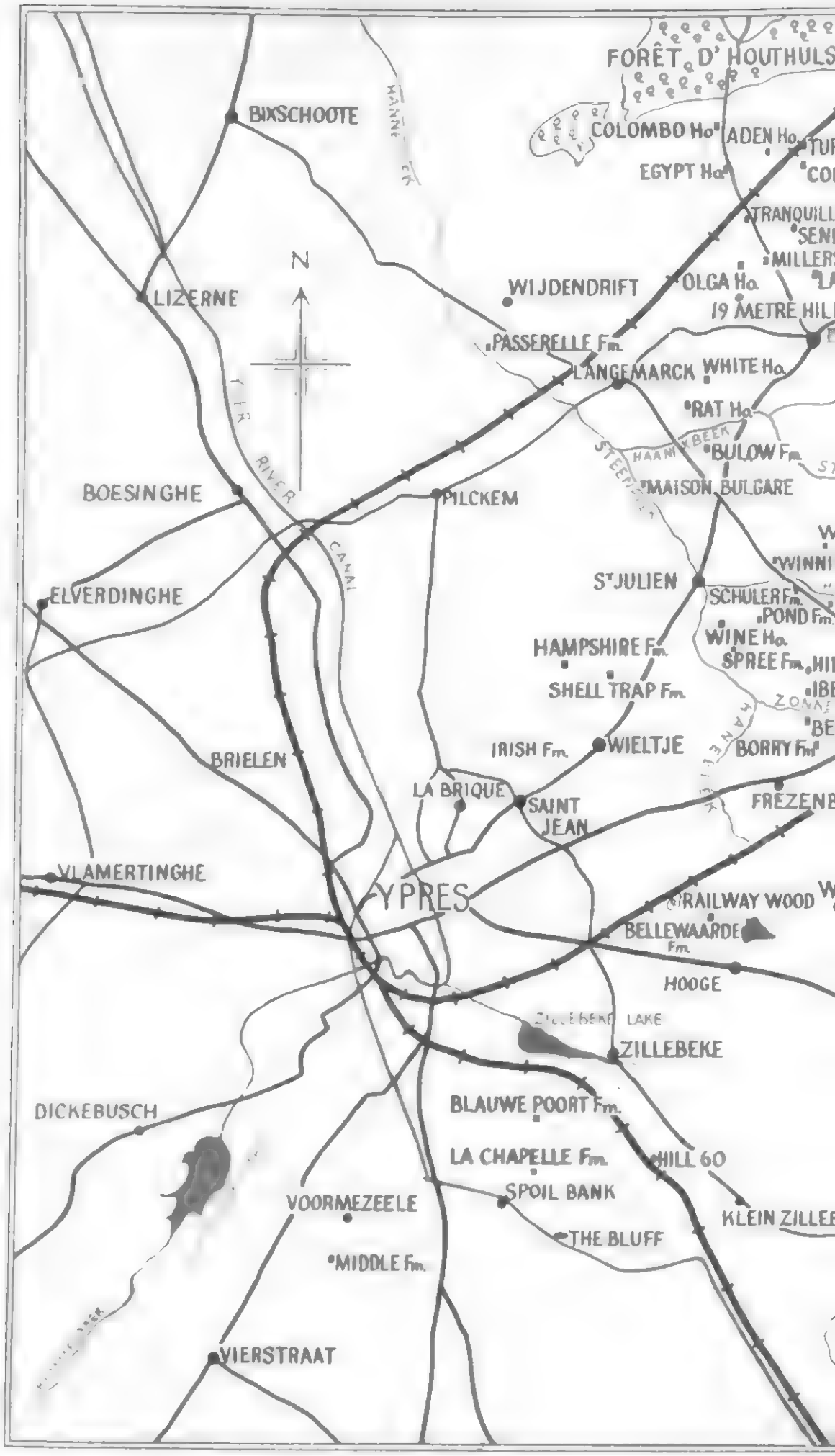
Military Cross

Captain H. Waterhouse. Captain K. E. Wheeler.
Captain L. A. Wilson.

Military Medal

Company Quartermaster-Serjeant F. Taylor.
Company Serjeant-Major T. Clough.
Lance-Corporal J. W. Smith.
Lance-Corporal J. D. Chambers.
Private A. Fairclough.
Private E. Butterworth.
Private H. Green.
Private W. C. Gower.
Private T. Greenwood.

YPR



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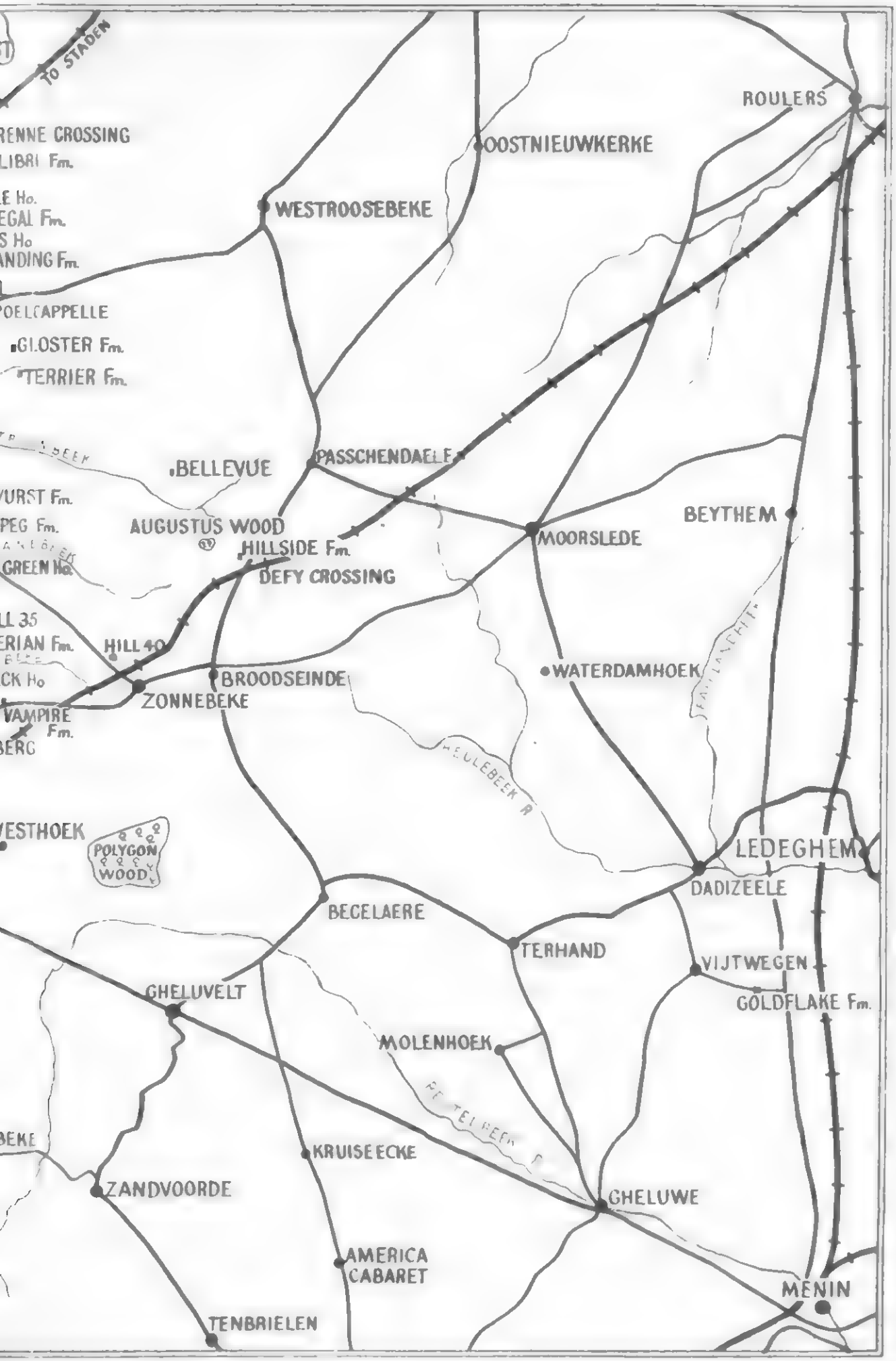

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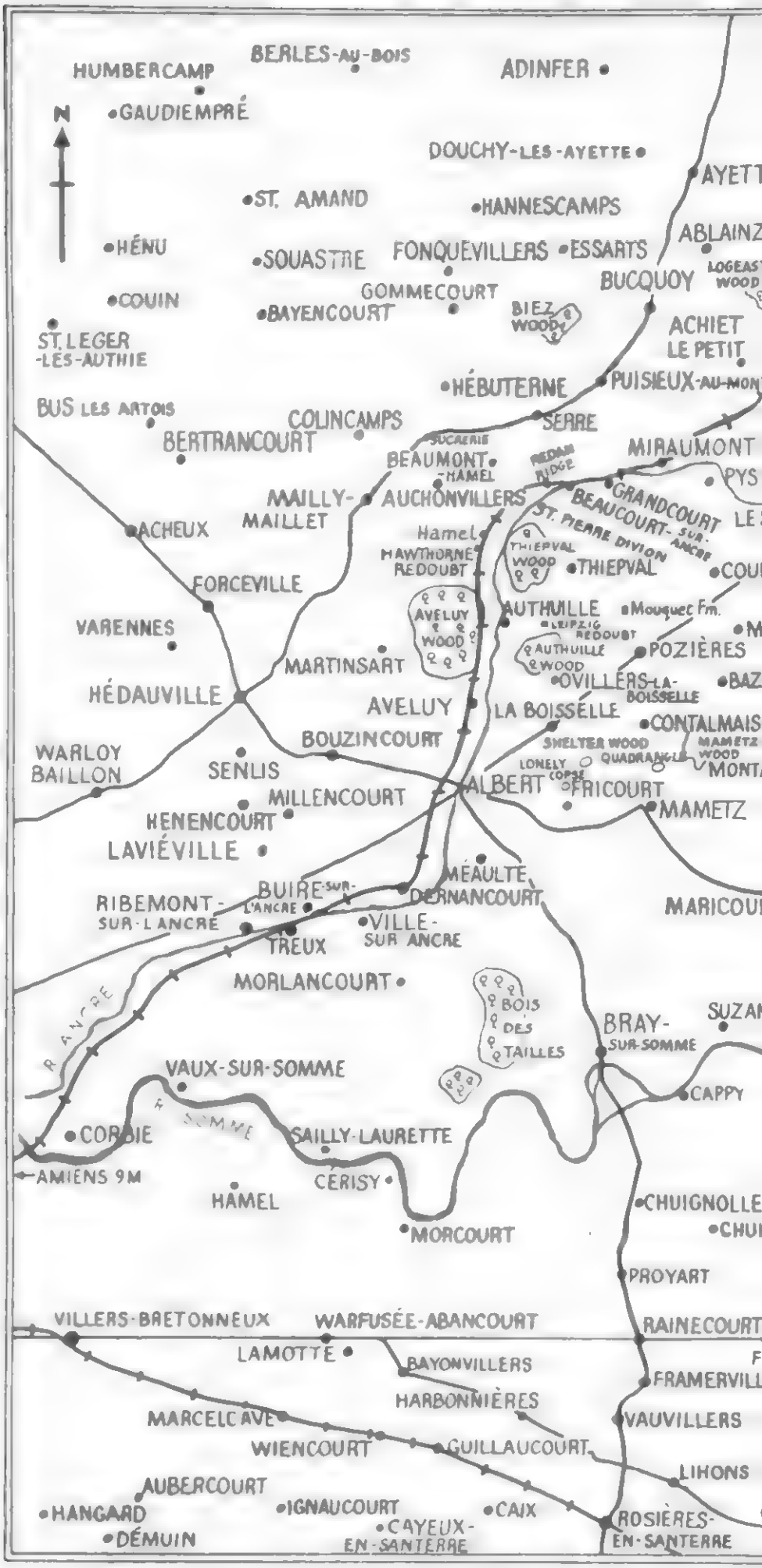
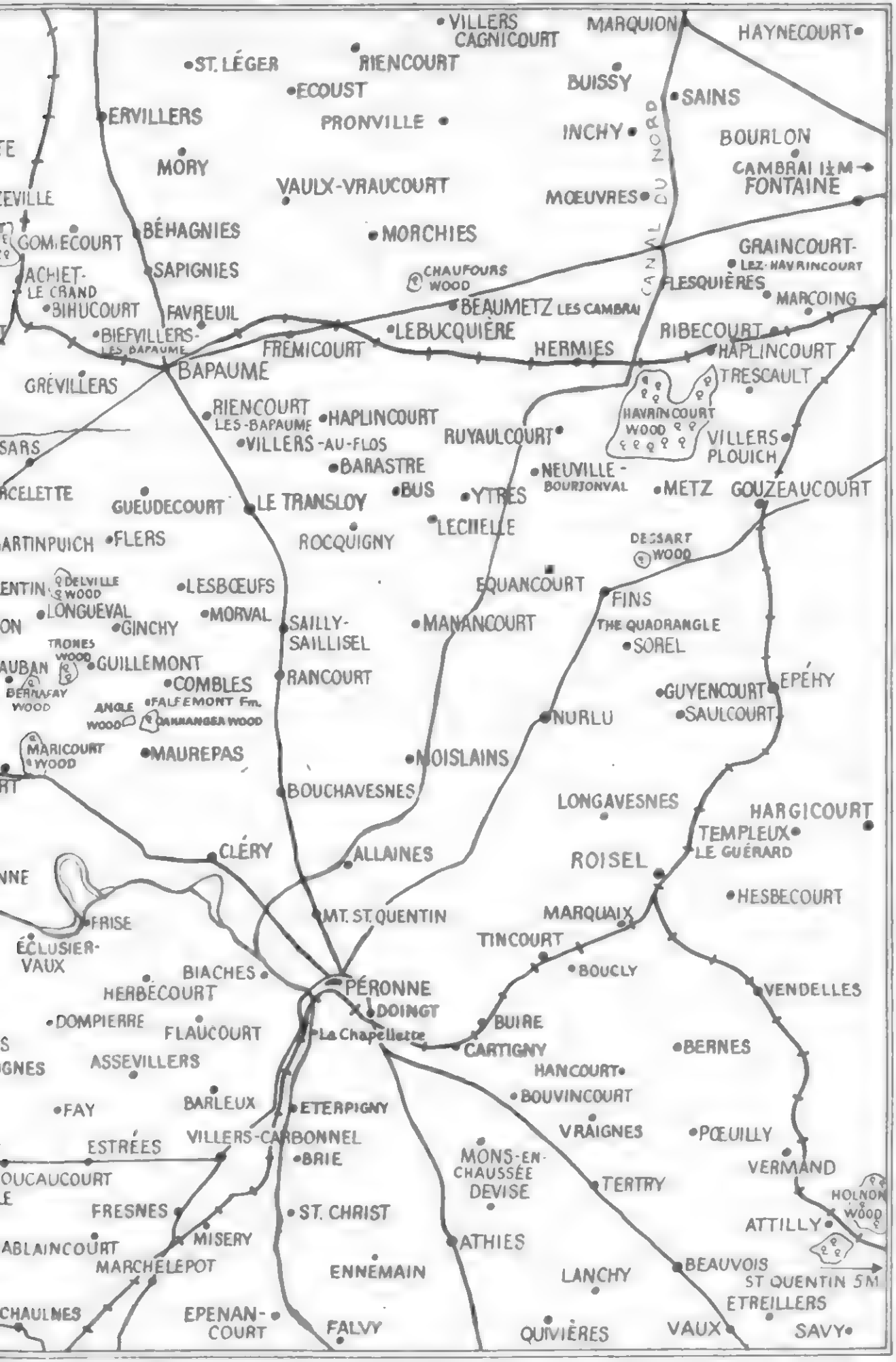

HUMBERCAMP
BERLES-AU-BOIS
ADINFER
N
GAUDIEMPRÉ
DOUCHY-LES-AYETTE
AYETT
ST. AMAND
HANNESCAMPS
ABLAINZ
HÉNU
SOUASTRE
FONQUEVILLERS
ESSARTS
LOGEAST WOOD
BUCQUOY
COUIN
GOMMECOURT
BAYENCOURT
BIEZ WOOD
ACHIET LE PETIT
ST. LEGER -LÈS-AUTHIE
HÉBUTERNE
PUISIEUX-AU-MON
BUS LES ARTOIS
COLINCAMPS
SERRE
BERTRANCOURT
SUCRERIE
MIRAUMONT
BEAUMONT -HAMEL
REDAN RIDGE
PYS
MAILLY-MAILLET
AUCHONVILLERS
GRANDCOURT
BEAUCOURT-SUR-ANCRE
ST. PIERRE DIVION
ACHEUX
Hamel
HAWTHORNE REDOUBT
THIEPVAL WOOD
THIEPVAL
FORCEVILLE
AVELUY WOOD
AUTHUILLE
Mouquet Fm.
VARENNES
LEIPZIG REDOUBT
AUTHUILLE WOOD
POZIÈRES
MARTINSART
OVILLERS-LA-BOISSELLE
HÉDAUVILLE
AVELUY
LA BOISSELLE
CONTALMAISON
BOUZINCOURT
SHELTER WOOD
QUADRANGLE
MAMETZ WOOD
WARLOY BAILLON
SENLIS
LONELY COPSE
ALBERT
FRICOURT
MILLENCOURT
MAMETZ
HENENCOURT
LAVIÉVILLE
MÉAULTE
BUIRE-SUR-L'ANCRE
DERNANCOURT
RIBEMONT-SUR-L'ANCRE
VILLE-SUR ANCRE
TREUX
MORLANCOURT
BOIS DES TAILLES
BRAY-SUR-SOMME
ANCRE
VAUX-SUR-SOMME
CAPPY
CORBIE
SOMME
SAILLY-LAURETTE
AMIENS 9M
CÉRISY
HAMEL
CHUIGNOLLES
MORCOURT
PROYART
VILLERS-BRETONNEUX
WARFUSÉE-ABANCOURT
RAINECOURT
LAMOTTE
BAYONVILLERS
FRAMERVILL
HARBONNIÈRES
MARCELCAVE
VAUVILLERS
WIENCOURT
GUILLAUCOURT
LIHONS
AUBERCOURT
HANGARD
IGNAUCOURT
CAIX
ROSIÈRES-EN-SANTERRE
DÉMUIN
CAYEUX-EN-SANTERRE

Miles 0 1 2

OMME AREA

MAP No. 9



Approximate Scale

4 6 8 Miles

Chapter XVI

MACEDONIA

"DOIRAN, 1917," "MACEDONIA, 1915-18"

(Maps 10 & 11)

12th Battalion

Over to Macedonia

THE first appearance of British troops in the Balkans since detach- 12TH BN.
ments of crusaders marched that way in the twelfth century was due to an Allied attempt to assist the Serbian armies in their desperate fight against a combined Austrian and Bulgarian invasion in the closing weeks of 1915.

The effort came too late to save Serbia from occupation, but a powerful Serbian army was able to withdraw to Corfu, there to be reorganized, and later to take part in the long-drawn and arduous campaign which ended in the sweeping advance and final victory of August, 1918.

The Regiment was represented in Macedonia by the 12th (Service) Battalion, and this narrative will follow the fortunes of that unit ; the only Service Battalion to have the honour of earning, alone, a battle honour for the Regimental Colours.

The Advance into Serbia

The situation when the 12th Battalion, as a unit of the 65th Brigade, 22nd Division, landed at Salonika on 5th November, 1915, was confused and dangerous. The 10th (Irish) Division and three divisions of French troops were holding positions against a powerful Bulgarian advance in the mountainous and roadless country north of Lake Doiran some seventy miles up-country from Salonika. Meanwhile two Greek corps were between them and Salonika, and the attitude of the Greek government was uncertain and indeed hostile. A withdrawal was therefore inevitable, and as the 10th Division was closely engaged, the 65th Brigade was ordered up from Salonika and reached Doiran on 9th December.

The 12th Battalion, whose only experience of war had been two months in the trenches in France, soon found themselves involved in the most difficult of military operations, a rear-guard action.

The 10th Division was withdrawing closely pressed and in some confusion owing to the fog which enveloped the mountain tops and enabled the Bulgarians to work up to close quarters. The French

troops on the left flank were similarly engaged, and some of their regiments, unable to follow the lines of retreat laid down, were compelled to mingle with the retreating Irish, and soon the only road, a narrow causeway between the town of Doiran and the lake, became seriously congested with disorganized troops and transport. Severe cold in the mountains and lack of winter equipment (the 10th Division had landed in their Gallipoli khaki) added to the trials and diminished the endurance of the hard-pressed soldiers.

To cover this retirement, the 65th Brigade took up a rear-guard position on 11th December with their right flank on the lake; the 12th Lancashire Fusiliers being on the right of the line. The enemy did not approach the position, but there was some long-range shelling by their artillery, and a French battery found some distant targets on the forward slopes of the recently evacuated positions.

The brigade was to be relieved by French troops that night, but at 8 30 p.m. the brigadier was told that "Everybody was retiring," and, finding by the masses of French troops on the road that this report was correct, obtained authority to withdraw to Greek territory south of Lake Doiran during the night.

Most of the brigade withdrew without interference, although the Lancashire Fusiliers who were in rear were mixed up with the French and refugees and were reduced to moving in single file along the causeway beside the lake; where a single machine gun could have worked havoc on men and animals crushed in a bottle-neck a mile long and a few feet wide.

By daylight on 12th December the whole British force which had entered Serbia was back in Greece, and the Bulgarian advanced guards were halted on the frontier.

The Entrenched Camp

Although the enemy had halted, there was no guarantee that he might not resume his advance, and the Allies began hastily to fortify a position which became known as the entrenched camp of Salonika, or, from the immense quantity of barbed wire that was erected, "the Birdcage." This position stretched from the gulf of Orfano (or Rendina), forty miles east of Salonika, to the Vardar, and was of great natural strength. Four British divisions were now in line, with the 22nd Division on the left; and for some weeks the 12th Battalion worked on the important key-point of "the Matterhorn," close to Daudli, linking up with the French on the left of the British line.

Work proceeded under arduous conditions, the rocky ground blunting the picks, and a bitter blast known as the Vardar wind sweeping for days at a time from the snow-clad Balkans and cutting through even the sheepskin jerkins which, with other winter necessities, were now arriving for the hitherto ill-provided troops.

By the early days of January the Allied defences had made such

good progress that the danger of a Bulgarian attack had greatly diminished, and the British could draw breath and take stock of the country where the fortune of war had strangely sent them. No happy glance was theirs.

In front lay grim Macedonia, barren, mountainous, and devastated by years of Balkan wars: no amenities here for the soldier, such as existed even in France; no estaminets, no leave trains to Blighty. "Quel pays!" feelingly remarked a French colonel, "pas de pain, pas de vin, pas de femmes! Quelle misère!" Behind was Salonika, meagre link with civilization, and, at that unapproached by the man of the line, and but rarely seen by the regimental officer, sent to buy such small luxuries as he could find for his company mess. Relaxation of a sort could certainly be found there, and was eagerly snatched by war-bitten youth; a tawdry music-hall seemed gay after stony hillsides; but the tawdryness was more notable than the gaiety, and in the words of the Official Historian, the very women of pleasure were the last reserves of the Army of Aphrodite.

True, the Salonika Force was spared in great measure the battle casualties of France, but two years of hardship, disease and little leave or relaxation bit deeply enough into its memories.

To the Frontier

By the end of February, 1916, it was clear that the enemy no longer contemplated an attack on Salonika, and it was only in the air that he had crossed the frontier.

A considerable portion of the German troops in Serbia had been withdrawn, and, moreover, the strength of the "Birdcage" defences furnished a strong argument against aggression. Falkenhayn, in supreme command in the Balkans, had no nebulous war aims, such as sometimes embarrassed Allied strategy, and contented himself with occupying strong positions on the frontier or just across it.

This was the time of severe German pressure on Verdun, and the Allied command decided that the future role of the Salonika Force should be to undertake a general offensive in the summer. Meanwhile their immediate duty was to reorganize for mountain warfare, and to threaten the enemy with an early attack to prevent him from detaching troops to other fronts.

To conform with this general plan, the British troops moved up in May, 1916, to occupy what has been described as the outer perimeter of the Salonika fortress.

The line as established, and as it was to exist until the final advance, ran from the gulf of Orfano, up the valley of the Struma, along the Krusha Balkan ridge to Lake Doiran, and thence to the River Vardar, where touch was gained with the French "Armee d'Orient."

The sector of the greatest importance, and the scene of the bitterest fighting, was that between Lake Doiran and the Vardar,

which covered the rail and river route to the interior of Serbia, and ultimately to Belgrade and the heart of the Central Powers. In various trenches and actions on this contested front the 12th Battalion was to prove its worth and expend its energies for the next two years. No longer, however, were the destinies of the battalion to be in the hands of its first commander. Colonel E. Macartney-Filgate, who had raised and trained the battalion and, by his personal example, had inspired all ranks with a remarkable enthusiasm and regimental spirit, was placed on the sick list on the 24th March, and shortly after was evacuated to England. Major C. A. Chaytor, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, who had joined the battalion in England, assumed command in his place.

The Doiran–Vardar Front

The ground south-west of Lake Doiran, says the Official History, is as tumbled and broken as any in Macedonia. 4,000 to 5,000 yards from the lake and following pretty closely its curves runs a steep-sided, knife-edged ridge, at its highest point well over 2,000 feet, and still over 1,800 at Horseshoe Hill—captured by the British in August—where it begins to descend. To various points on this ridge the French, when their troops held the front, had given the name Piton (peak) 1, Piton 2, etc. Hence had arisen the title of "P" or "Pip" Ridge which will remain of grim significance so long as any memory of the Macedonian Campaign is in the mind of man.

Between the ridge and the lake is an extraordinary jumble of hills of all shapes and sizes, broken up by deep gullies. The biggest, the Jumeaux Ravine, four hundred feet deep, formed a fosse in front of 2,500 yards of the enemy's defences.

Looking north-westward from the British lines above the lake shore, the spectacle presented was of a rough and irregular terrace, rising to a peak about half-way between the lake and the "P" Ridge. This peak was the Grand Couronné, which will always share the notoriety of its neighbour, P.2. Both dominated not only the British lines but all the country southward towards Salonika, as far as eye could see, overlooking trenches, battery positions and communications so completely as to have a serious psychological effect upon the troops, who felt that all their existence was passed beneath the enemy's eye.

The whole position was admirably fortified. The work had been begun by the two German divisions which had been on this front after the Allied retreat from Serbia; and their Bulgarian successors had profited by their example and continued their labours.

On the rest of the ten-mile front from Lake Doiran to the Vardar nature had hardly been so kind to the defence, although everywhere there was a broad glacis sloping up to the enemy lines, which were well sited on rising ground culminating in a strong position known as the "Piton des Mitrailleuses," or "Machine-gun Hill," above the village of Machukovo on the left bank of the Vardar.

The River Vardar at this point was a swift-flowing and unfordable stream, which marked the left of the British line.

The 12th Battalion had their first distant introduction to this formidable front when, in May, 1916, the 65th Brigade moved up to Kukush and occupied positions south of Kilindir in support of the French Colonial troops who were then in touch with the enemy on the frontier.

The dry, hot summer of southern Europe had now set in, and the brigade was more troubled with grass fires, which swept with surprising speed across the parched countryside, than with direct enemy action.

On the 25th, however, "C" Company of the battalion, who were holding an advanced position on the railway and were watching with kindly interest a French armoured train being shelled out of Kilindir station, received an unpleasant surprise when a lucky shell broke the line ahead of the train, which tactlessly stopped in the company area, and attracted some half-dozen heavy shells into the company bivouacs, fortunately without serious results.

About this time slouch-hats and shorts were issued, with the inevitable result that the troops found themselves described as "Anzacs" in any photographs that appeared in the home newspapers.

Until the end of June the brigade remained in support of the French, and the War Diary reports little but occasional air activity and long-range shelling. On 20th June the brigade was relieved by the 17th French Colonial Division, and withdrew to its old camps on the Matterhorn in the Salonika defences. Here a month was spent in training and reorganization. The battalion was now fully equipped for mountain warfare; all wheeled transport was withdrawn and replaced by pack-mules, and sun-helmets and shirt-sleeves were the order of dress.

On 20th July Lieutenant-Colonel J. L. F. Tweedie, under whose command the battalion was to make its name as a fighting unit, arrived from the Gloucestershire Regiment to assume command. Shortly after his arrival the battalion was once again on the move to the forward area; the British having now definitely taken over the Doiran–Vardar front of the Allied line. After a strenuous march of five days, in the course of which the Galiko river was crossed in flood, the battalion arrived in Kilindir and was soon engaged in such business as reconnaissance patrols and protective duties to forward artillery positions in the Dobrovica-Rates sector.

On 8th September, having moved to Ardzan, the battalion carried out the first of those raids which were to give it an outstanding reputation in the Salonika Force. At 11 p.m. two platoons of "A" Company under Captain G. Wormald raided listening-posts on Crête des Tentes. The operation was carried out without loss and one German was killed and one taken prisoner.

Close behind the front now held by the 22nd Division lay the marshy and reed-fringed waters of Lake Ardzan, the breeding-ground of millions of mosquitoes, and soon the chief curse of the

Balkan campaign began to deplete the ranks and sap the strength of the army. Macedonia is the most malaria-ridden country of Europe and the disease is of a virulent kind, 1 per cent. of hospital admissions in 1916 proving fatal. The Struma valley held the worst record, the sick rate of the 10th Division rising to a hundred a day, but the anopheles was by no means confined to the low-lying country, and few escaped the sudden onset and debilitating effects of the disease.

At the height of the summer heats, and with its numbers thinned with malaria and dysentery, the Salonika Force was called on for a renewed effort against the Bulgarian defences. The Allies had at last persuaded Rumania to enter the field and a military convention promised, among other things, a definite offensive ("*offensive affirmée*" in the original) from Salonika, to help the concentration of the Rumanian forces. The main effort was to be made by the Serbians west of the Vardar, while the French and British were to operate near the Vardar and Lake Doiran with a view to pinning down the maximum number of Bulgarian troops and perhaps obtaining a local success which would be the key to a general advance. Rumania marched to her fate, and the Serbian advance culminated in the capture of Monastir.

On the British front the 7th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry captured Horseshoe Hill above Lake Doiran and the 12th Lancashire Fusiliers were to fight the fiercest action of their career on the heights of the Piton des Mitrailleuses above the village of Machukovo on the east bank of the Vardar.

Machukovo

The action of Machukovo is the name given in the Official History to the important operation carried out by the 65th Infantry Brigade under Brigadier-General L. N. Herbert on the night of 13th September against the Piton des Mitrailleuses and the Dorsale, north of Machukovo.

The 22nd Divisional Artillery had begun wire-cutting on the 12th, and on the 13th an artillery preparation had been carried on all day, including further wire-cutting, fire on the enemy's works by 4.5-inch and 6-inch howitzers, and counter-battery fire by the LXI Heavy Group near Kalinova and French heavy artillery from the other bank of the Vardar.

The 12th Lancashire Fusiliers and 14th King's (Liverpool) Regiment moved out from the British wire at 7.30 p.m. and assembled near the south-east corner of Machukovo.

The first two paragraphs of Lieutenant-Colonel Tweedie's operation order were as follows :—

"Information. (*a*) Latest information points to the 59th Regiment of the 101st German Division as holding the hostile front.

(*b*) The enemy's patrols are constantly met with by night on the southern slopes of Dorsale."

"INTENTION. The enemy's position will be attacked on the night 13th/14th, captured, cleared of the enemy and consolidated during the same night."

The battalion moved to the position of assembly without incident, "C" Company acting as advanced guard, and there took up the formation in which it was to advance to the assault. "C" Company (Captain G. F. Page) and "D" Company (Lieutenant C. H. J. Foster), under command of the former officer, were to lead, with "B" Company (Captain J. G. K. Farrar) in support and "A" Company (Captain G. Wormald) in reserve.

Strong patrols were sent forward by both the leading companies up the spurs by which they were to advance, and the companies followed in columns of platoons. The night was not dark, but touch was difficult to maintain as a deep ravine divided the leading companies, and the crash and roar of the bombardment drowned all other sounds.

A wounded officer from a patrol now reported that the wire was unapproachable owing to our bombardment, but that there seemed to be gaps, and that the enemy was on the alert; indeed, machine-gun fire now began to make itself felt, mostly, however, passing over the heads of the leading troops, who were lying on the rocky hillside waiting for the signal to assault. But an unlucky bullet at about this time found and killed Captain Guy Wormald, the senior company commander and an officer of outstanding character and ability.

At 2 a.m. on the 14th the artillery lifted and in the sudden silence the leading troops were cheered on to the attack. Rifle and machine-gun fire broke out from the ruined trenches, but the charge swept through the broken wire, and those of the German garrison who had braved and survived the bombardment were quickly killed or captured.

Immediate enemy resistance was at an end, and for a time the artillery of both sides spared the disputed ground, the opposing gunners waiting for news of the issue of the fight. Consolidation was quickly put under way, enemy dug-outs were bombed and explored, and prisoners and captured machine guns were sent to the rear. Lance-Corporal J. Lancashire led several of these bombing attacks with conspicuous gallantry. The captured ground being solid rock, but little digging could be done, and what sandbags were available were used to improve the shattered trenches and to construct posts on the trace of the enemy's support line which now became the forward slope of the new position.

As dawn broke the position had been organized, touch had been gained with the King's on the right, and battalion headquarters was established near the old enemy front line. The troops had leisure to

boil tea in their mess-tins and to speculate as to what the day held in store. They were not long to be held in doubt. The Dome, an isolated position on the battalion's right front, had resisted capture, and with the growing light tenacious German machine-gunners soon made movement hazardous. But at about seven o'clock a scouting aeroplane heralded the true ordeal of the defending soldiers.

No longer could the enemy doubt as to who held the hill, and from front and flanks their guns opened with a crash.

For hours now the battalion had but to wait and endure. Penned on a ridge some two hundred yards long and of the width of two tennis-courts, they were the target of the concentrated guns of a division. The trenches crumbled to open ditches of shale and broken bodies, and a fierce sun and choking clouds of dust and fumes tortured the waterless garrison.

A severe barrage stopped most communication with the rear, but a brave man could get through, and an incident may be recalled to show that the 12th Battalion had learnt discipline as well as courage in its short history. Into a trench full of thirst-tormented men dropped a shirt-sleeved and breathless soldier carrying a rum-jar of water. There was a rush for the precious jar; but he cried, "Stand back, lads; this is for the King's"—and the Fusiliers sent him on his way. The battalion stretcher-bearers tended the many wounded throughout the day, regardless of the ceaseless bombardment, conspicuous among them being Private J. Heywood.

At two in the afternoon, without abatement of the bombardment, came the expected infantry assault; the Germans charging into the bursts of their own shells. A fire-fight at short range took place, and the enemy for a time seized the Piton on the left. An immediate counter-attack led by Lieutenant R. C. Scott successfully expelled them, and the defences were still intact. The line was by now by no means continuous and several independent platoon actions were fought, Lieutenant W. J. C. Kendall in particular doing gallant work in the defence of his position.

At 3.20 p.m. the King's on the right were withdrawn to the lower slopes of the Dorsale before they should be completely destroyed by artillery fire; and, at 4 p.m., the Lancashire Fusiliers also withdrew to the south-west of the hill.

At 4.35 p.m., recognizing that the enemy's enfilade fire made the whole position untenable, Major-General Hon. F. Gordon, the Divisional Commander, ordered a withdrawal to the original line to begin at dusk.

The artillery covered the infantry withdrawal with great effect. The enemy made an attempt to follow up, but so fierce was the British barrage laid on the crest—from which the battalion had retired a bare fifty yards—that the Germans who had lined it were at once driven to ground.

The remnants of the two British battalions were back in their own lines by 10 p.m.

About seventy prisoners, all belonging to the German 59th

Regiment, and nine machine guns were captured, and a number of trench mortars were destroyed. The battalion suffered severely. Captains G. Wormald and J. G. K. Farrar and Second-Lieutenants H. W. Budden, S. Warburton and B. W. Yorke-Lodge were killed, and Lieutenants C. R. B. Chiesman, P. H. G. Coggin, W. J. C. Kendall, R. C. Lott and R. W. Morris were wounded. Of about 350 N.C.Os. and men who went into action, nearly 200 were killed or wounded.

The following decorations were awarded for the action : -

Distinguished Service Order

Captain G. F. Page.

Military Cross

Second-Lieutenant W. J. C. Kendall.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Lance-Corporal J. Lancashire. Private J. Heywood.

Military Medal

Serjeant F. Wilkinson. Corporal J. H. Gee.
Lance-Corporal E. Ankers. Lance-Corporal W. Wheeldon.
Private P. Cain.

Krusha Balkan

The Action of Machukovo shows the difficulties which confronted the XII Corps on the Vardar front. Raiding parties to points, like the vineyards of Machukovo, outside the enemy's main wire could generally reach their objective but could not make certain of bringing him to action. A raid against the main line was, however, a serious business. There were two or three strong belts of wire covering the whole front from Doiran to the Vardar ; the trenches were often ten feet deep ; the dugouts were unaffected by field-guns, and it took a direct hit by a 6-inch howitzer to damage one of them.

General Milne, therefore, transferred his pressure to the Struma front, where, in the affair of Bairakli Jum'a, the 83rd Infantry Brigade continued the British offensive.

Meanwhile the march of events had decided the plans of the Allied Army. The bright hopes of Rumania had faded and the threatening situation in Old Greece forced General Sarrail to be content with the capture of Monastir and thereafter to consolidate and reorganize his positions. The British were now to hold the whole front from the mouth of the Struma to the Vardar, and late in November the 65th Brigade were withdrawn from the 22nd Division and took over the front of the Italian Ivrea Brigade between Akbuzalik, in the wooded Krusha Balkan hills south of the Butkovo valley, and Doiran. Lakes Doiran and Butkovo are connected by a deep valley, broken into two by the spur of Dova Tepe, which forms a watershed whence the Hoja runs westward to Lake Doiran and the Butkovo eastward to Lake Butkovo. The main lines of the adversaries were upon the hills north and south of this valley, that

of the Bulgarians being in fact on the crest of the high and precipitous Belashitza Planina. Yet, if the enemy's main line was five miles away from the British outposts, the villages in the valley were held by the Bulgarians in some strength.

So until the end of January, 1917, the 12th Battalion found themselves afforded a respite in surroundings less grim than the bare rocks and battered trenches of the Doiran front. Battalion headquarters was established in the Greek frontier fort of Dova Tepe, and the wire and trenches—what there was of either in the extended line—ran through thick cover on the wooded hills. The Italians of those days, while light hearted about such subjects as wiring and sanitation, knew how to make themselves comfortable, and the battalion probably spent its best Christmas of the war in their thatched and sandbagged shelters behind the company positions.

While no serious action was carried out on this front, patrolling was active in the extensive and broken No Man's Land, and the brigade undertook an interesting operation early in January. The object of the raid was to surround the village of Akinjali and prevent the escape of the garrison. All four battalions of the brigade supplied parties, which were supported by five and a half batteries of artillery, including one French 155-millimetre battery. All the objectives were taken, but only four prisoners were captured, and the withdrawal was effected with little loss.

Soon after this the brigade was relieved and the battalion was back in its old surroundings on the Doiran front by the end of January.

Spring, 1917

It was soon clear that neither side intended to rest quietly in their trenches in the new year, and the enemy quickly showed that he had brought fresh weapons into the field.

Hitherto the activity in the air had been restricted by both sides to reconnaissance and occasional bombing by single machines, but on 27th February the battalion War Diary reports that twenty enemy machines flew over the camp in Glencoe Ravine. This was the disastrous raid that went down the Vardar to Salonika and bombed Summer Hill Camp, the big reinforcement centre north of Salonika, causing nearly three hundred casualties. The Germans had established in secrecy a fast and well-trained bombing squadron at Hudova, and caused the British R.F.C. much trouble until they disappeared to another front in May of 1917.

On 17th March the War Diary reports as follows: "Enemy shelled Lothian Ravine at night very heavily with gas shells." This was the first use of gas by the enemy and was part of a general bombardment on the front of the 22nd Division. Several thousand rounds were fired, but casualties were not high except in one brigade, which lost 104, of whom 103 were from gas poisoning. The battalion was fortunate. Although only equipped with the old

"P.H." helmet, no casualties were suffered, probably because the gas collected in the ravines while the companies were mostly bivouacked on the slopes of the hills. Box respirators were rushed up and distributed as quickly as possible. At various points the Bulgars pushed forward strong parties during the night, presumably to ascertain what damage had been done, but nowhere did they enter the British lines.

Although the opening moves of 1917 seemed to show that the initiative was being taken by the enemy, General Sarrail was not without a plan, and the British troops were soon to learn that a major offensive role was to be demanded of them. The Allies had missed winning an important victory in 1916 but had gained a considerable success, and fortune was to be tempted again in the spring. On the British front the main attack was to be in the neighbourhood of Lake Doiran, and during March and April the dispositions of the XII Corps were altered in order to concentrate the more experienced troops of the 22nd and 26th Divisions for the attack and transfer the 60th Division to the left flank. When the moves were over the 26th Division held a front of 8,000 yards (including Lake Doiran) from Pataros to the Vladaja Ravine; the 22nd one of two thousand yards from the Vladaja Ravine to the road running southward from Krastali; and the 60th thence to the Vardar.

The Battle of Doiran, 1917

Those regiments, including the Lancashire Fusiliers, whose Service battalions fought in the battle of 24th-25th April, 1917, in Macedonia, bear the words "Doiran, 1917" as a battle honour, and the 22nd and 26th Divisions of the Great War take their place on the roll of history with the men of Minden and the Alma.

The 12th Battalion occupied the Whaleback trenches, about half a mile south-east of Krastali on 18th April and were active in patrolling and improving the defences in the days before the battle. On the 22nd battalion headquarters and "C" Company (Captain G. F. Page, D.S.O.), moved up from Clichy Ravine to Whaleback, sustaining five casualties during the move from enemy artillery fire, which was increasing in reply to the bombardment from the British guns which had begun as a prelude to the battle. From the front line on Whaleback the Fusiliers could observe the enemy positions about Krastali and the western side of the P. ridge, but the area of advance was screened from their view by the intervening heights of Horseshoe Hill, and their memory of the battle is of the crash and flash of the bombardments and counter-bombardments of both sides while the tragic issue was disputed around the Jumeaux Ravine and the ruins of Doljeli.

General Wilson's orders to the XII Corps envisaged an advance in two phases, the second of which—the consolidation of a position along the Doiran-Krastali road—was to take place at a subsequent date. All that he now contemplated was the capture of the enemy's

first line ; the works between the lake and the Petit Couronné, that hill, Hill 380, the Mamelon and the most advanced work on the P. ridge. Even if this attack were successful, the British would still be faced by a second position on the Hilt and the Tongue features (west of the town), and behind that again the Grand Couronné would still loom up unconquered. Only if all these lines fell would the way be opened for an advance up the Vardar valley into Serbia. Not yet— not, indeed, for more than a year was this victory to be gained.

The night attack of the 79th and 78th Brigades of the 26th Division ended in unrelieved tragedy. The assaulting troops were caught by the enemy barrage in and beyond the Jumeaux Ravine, whose rocky sides were a deadly shell-trap, and those soldiers who reached the enemy lines found them empty and were destroyed by artillery and mortar fire.

The attack of the 66th Brigade of the 22nd Division had more success. The assault was carried out by the 8th King's Shropshire Light Infantry against Hill 380 and the 13th Manchester Regiment against P.4½ (half a mile north-east of Krastali) The enemy's barrage had been located the previous night and the troops deployed beyond it, thus avoiding the disastrous casualties of the Jumeaux Ravine. Moreover, consolidation was done beyond the captured enemy trenches and not in them, which also disconcerted the enemy artillery. Definite gains were therefore made on the 22nd Division front, and these gains were held and subsequently wired and entrenched, the new line running from Hill 380, north of Jackson Ravine (600 yards north-west of Doljeli) round P.4½, and thence back to the British lines.

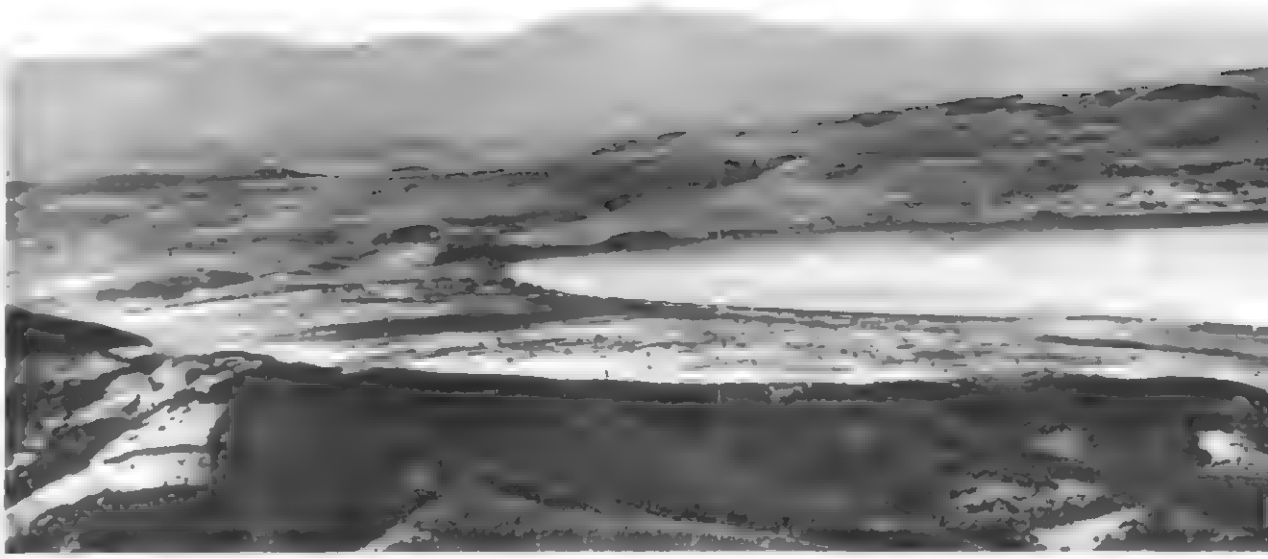
The casualties of the XII Corps, of which only three brigades had been actively engaged, were very heavy, being over three thousand, and the gain of ground was not decisive. Not for the first time in British military history, strategy had demanded what was tactically impossible.

Aftermath

The failure of the 26th Division's attack and the success of the 22nd Division resulted in the salient hitherto existing in the British line between La Tortue and Horseshoe Hill becoming still more pronounced. General Wilson therefore proposed that the former division should make a renewed attack upon the enemy's line between Lake Doiran and the Petit Couronné. At the same time the 22nd Division was to simulate an attack against P.4, and to advance its line at the Whaleback and raid the village of Krastali.

The operation was timed for 8th May, and on 3rd May the 12th Lancashire Fusiliers moved into the Horseshoe sector and relieved the 9th East Lancashire Regiment in the new line captured from the Bulgars, that is P.4½, P.5 and Jackson Ravine.

Existence in the new line for the forward companies and even for advanced battalion headquarters was hard to bear. Officers and



Official Ph...

Panoram

The town of Dolran can be seen at the edge of the lake, to the left of th

ua of Lake Doiran, Macedonia

e centre of the photograph. The long, dark feature behind the town is " P " ("Pip") Ridge

men lay by twos and threes in ruts scratched in the rocky soil. No movement at all was possible by day, and day and night the ground was swept by machine-gun and shrapnel bullets. One company commander lay with his runner in a slit whence his predecessor of the East Lancashire had been carried with both his feet blown off, and during the night a shell from the same gun tore to pieces the few sandbags which had been built up as some exiguous shelter. The troops were paying grimly for that communique which could announce that "our line was advanced on the P. ridge."

At 9.50 p.m. on 8th May the 20th Division again attacked the Petit Couronné and the battalion sent out two patrols of an officer and twenty-five men each to demonstrate against the enemy works on P.4. They returned with two casualties, and heavy fighting continued on the right and throughout the night.

On 9th May the Bulgars counter-attacked and the 20th Division was forced back to its original positions.

On the same night the Battalion was relieved by the 9th South Lancashire Regiment and withdrew to rest at Saida.

Raids and Routine

Not again was the battalion to take part in a great battle, but a year was to pass before they were to leave the Doiran front and in the year a record of gallantry and endurance was steadily built up, based not on outstanding events, but on raids and trench duties, the fight against disease and discouragement, the daily routine which makes or breaks a battalion.

How the 12th Battalion came through may best be told by extracts from the terse jottings of the War Diary, and by the comments of the Generals under whom the battalion served

1917, *9th August.*

"Weather good. The bombardment of P.4 & P.4¼ continued throughout the day. Enemy registered our Fire Trenches & Communication Trenches & also his own Barrage. At dusk, Patrol consisting of 1 officer & 20 other ranks left our wire at Jackson Ravine & moved up the South slopes of P.4¼ to find out what damage our bombardment had done to the enemy works. The first belt of wire was reached & found to be cut.... As the patrol moved through this wire they were met by a volley of bombs & rifle fire from a line of Bulgars about 28 strong, who were lying about 10 yards in front of them.... The Bulgars then charged down the slope which was very steep, into our men. Our patrol, which was under 2nd Lieut. Walton, stood their ground & received the enemy. A desperate hand to hand fight took place in which 14 Bulgars were killed with the bayonet & 1 prisoner taken. The remainder threw down their arms & ran towards our line, but the majority of them got away. The enemy works were then reconnoitred & it was found that much damage had been done by the artillery. On returning, a party under Corporal Woodward

found 3 Bulgars lying in the scrub . . . ; these were killed with the bayonet. It is thought that one was an officer."

For bravery in action on 9th August, Second-Lieutenant K. Walton was awarded the Military Cross and Serjeant W. Leeson and Corporal A. Woodward the Military Medal.

30th August.

"At 21.12 hrs. a raiding party consisting of 2nd Lieut. Barwick, 2nd Lieut. Franks, 30 other ranks and 8 stretcher-bearers, passed through our wire toward the enemy work P.4¼. . . . They advanced as close to the barrage as possible to take advantage of the dust to screen them. . . . At 21.35 the front line was rushed. The right party under 2nd Lieut. Franks drove out 2 Bulgars who were shot and killed. The trench was then crossed and the party made for a deep pit in which Bulgars were found who fired point blank range, the shots however taking no effect. Our party killed two and wounded another. The remainder surrendered and were taken prisoner. The left party under 2nd Lieut. Barwick met a post of about six, two of whom were bayoneted and killed. . . . The trenches in the second line were reached and found to be vacated . . . and almost levelled . . . by our artillery. Casualties: 2nd Lieut. Franks slightly wounded and 5 other ranks."

It is interesting to note how much our troops had come to rely on the bayonet at this stage in the war. Rifle fire was little used; a fact noted by the enemy. "Il parait que les soldats anglais ne tiraient presque pas," said the Bulgarian writer, Colonel Nedeff.

7th September.

"To Headquarters 65 Brigade. Please convey to the officers and other ranks of the 12th Lancashire Fusiliers, who took part in the raid on P.4¼ on the night of 30/31 August, my high appreciation of their gallantry and dash. . . . (Sgd.) J. Duncan, Major-General, Commanding 22nd Division."

9th October.

"At 0930 hrs. a party consisting of Lieut. C. H. B. Brundle & 25 O.R. raided the enemy works (Z2) according to plan. The whole work was searched but no enemy were encountered. The dugouts & trenches had been completely destroyed by our artillery. Lieut. Brundle & 2 O.R. were killed in the enemy work by their barrage, 5 O.R. missing believed killed, 9 wounded."

Seventeen casualties out of twenty-five here, and the cause fairly plain. The enemy, warned by the bombardment, saw the party approaching, withdrew their garrison, and shelled their own trenches. Thus sways the luck of war.

On 28th October Lieutenant-Colonel J. L. F. Tweedie, D.S.O., was invalided home, after fifteen months of hard fighting, front-line command. He was succeeded, first by Lieutenant-Colonel R. G. T.

Currey, Leinster Regiment, who was wounded on 10th December on the Horseshoe, and then by Lieutenant-Colonel R. F. Gross, D.S.O., South Wales Borderers, who held the command with distinction until the battalion was reorganized in France.

11th December.

"Weather good during day ; heavy mist with sleet during night. A raiding party of 20 O.R. under 2/Lt. Macklin entered the enemy works at P.4¼ at 0503 hrs. this morning. The party had great difficulty in entering the work owing to a formidable row of interlocked knife rests . . . but succeeded in pulling them apart & in entering P.4¼ which they found had been vacated by the enemy. They stayed for 10 minutes & then withdrew. . . . Casualties 8 O.R. wounded . The enemy put down a barrage . . . from 0510–0540 . . ."

Lieutenant Macklin again led a party of twenty other ranks on to P.4¼ at 1850 hrs., supported by a flank party under Second-Lieutenant Tyson. He occupied the work until 2230 hrs. and then withdrew, without casualties.

"The following message was received from 65th Infty. Bde. 'Officer Commanding 12th Lancashire Fusiliers. Please congratulate all concerned in the successful operation last night. Success does not depend on number of prisoners . . . but in achieving one's object, which was done. No doubt the enemy realized that the Battalion famous for entering their works was in front of them, and did not wish to meet them again.—Brig. Gen. G. F. Bailey, comndg. 65th Inf. Bde.' "

On the night of 21st 22nd April the whole battalion was employed on a raid against the Bulgar positions on O.2 and O.3, south of Lake Doiran. "B" and "C" Companies attacked O.2, while "D" Company assaulted the works on O.3. On the whole front the enemy works were entered after hand-to-hand fighting and casualties were inflicted and dug-outs destroyed. A feature of this operation was that thirty-three body shields per company were issued and proved most useful in warding off bayonet thrusts and splinters of bombs and shell. The enemy wireless, on the 24th, announced the raid in the following terms, eloquent of the impression made by three companies of Fusiliers :—

> "After four days of heavy bombardment several English battalions attacked our positions on a wide front south of Lake Doiran. After a violent struggle our brave infantry, supported by artillery, threw back the enemy attack."

Many gallant deeds were done by platoon officers and men in these deadly raids and patrols and the names of three winners of the Military Cross may be recorded here.

The patrol led by Second-Lieutenant C. B. Westoby was met by a hostile bombing party and at the same time was attacked in the flank. Westoby at once charged, shot the leader with his revolver and dispersed the rest.

Captain D. Pennington led a party, which he had previously trained with great care, in a raid. Success was due to his courageous leadership and skilful planning.

Second-Lieutenant B. H. Stott was severely wounded in an attack, but rallied his men and led a second charge, when he was again hit, receiving in all fifteen wounds.

Finale

On the 4th July, 1918, the 12th Lancashire Fusiliers, under orders for France, paraded for their farewell visit from their Commander-in-Chief, General Sir G. F. Milne, K.C.B., D.S.O. Here is the War Diary account :—

"The C.in-C. inspected the Battalion in Light Marching Order at 1800 hours. The Battalion was drawn up in mass and the C.-in-C. carefully inspected all ranks. After the inspection all the officers and W.Os. were formed up in front and the C.-in-C. wished each one 'Goodbye' afterwards presenting the Ribband of the Military Cross to Capt. F. Franks and the Ribband of the Meritorious Service Medal to 2/Lieut. P. Morrison, A.S.C., late C.Q.M.S. of this Battalion. The Battalion was then closed up and the C.-in-C. made the following speech :—

" 'Lancashire Fusiliers, before you leave this country I want to thank you specially for the excellent work done and the magnificent discipline maintained during the time you have been out here. I know that at one time you suffered more from malaria than any other regiment, but I am very glad to see how well you are looking now.

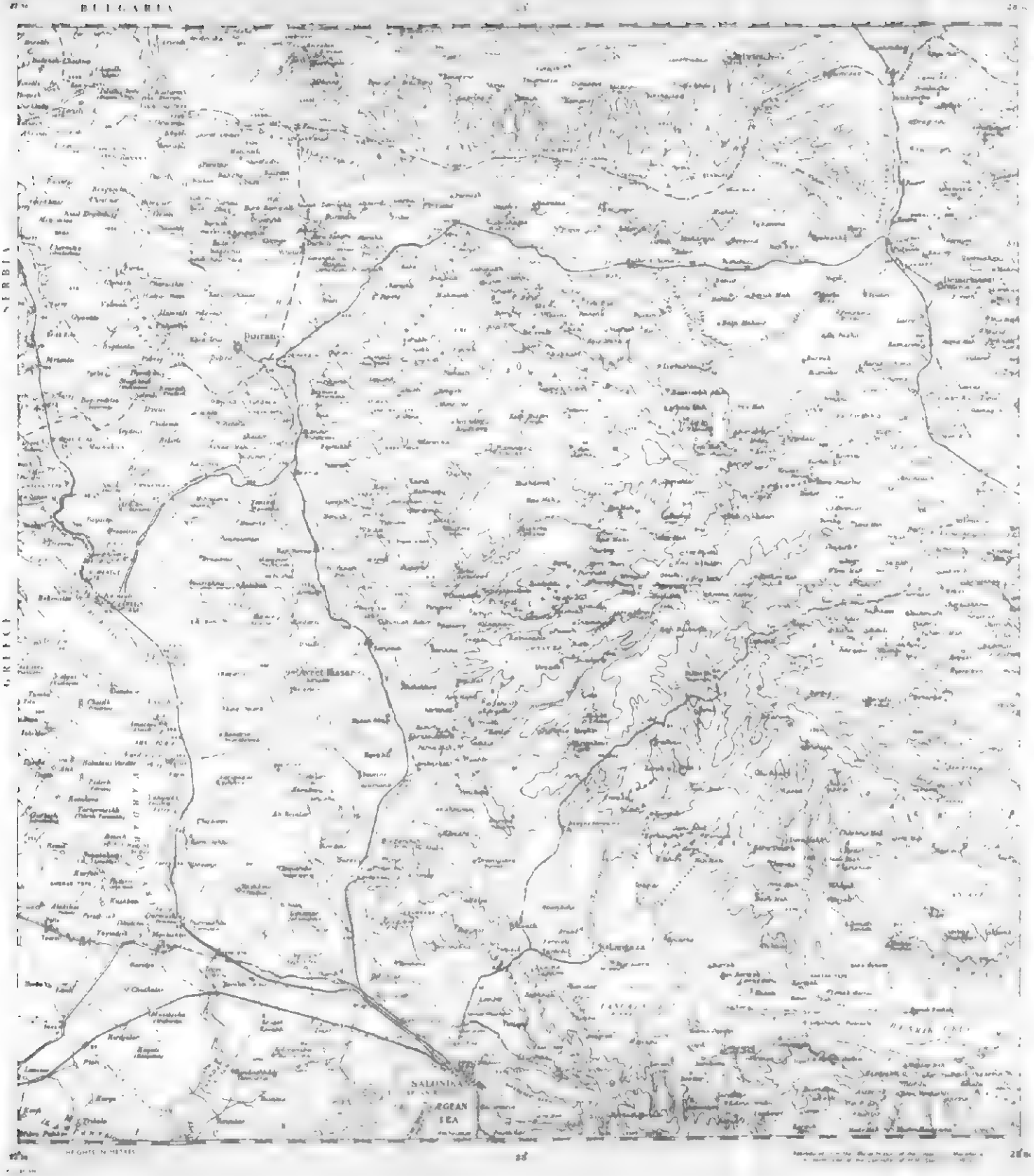
" 'You are going to France because your own County troops, the West Lancashire Division, have suffered severe losses and need reinforcements. You are going as a Battalion, to take the place of other Battalions that have been practically wiped out, but the same spirit that has been shown by the splendid troops in France has ALWAYS been shown by the Lancashire troops in this country. I congratulate you on it.

" 'I am very sorry you are going, but it is for the good of the country.' "

With this farewell message from their Commander-in-Chief the record of the 12th Lancashire Fusiliers in the Great War may well close. Directly afterwards the battalion went to France and was incorporated with the 6th Battalion of the Regiment. No further Order of Battle showed its name, but its spirit lived on and was renewed in the battalions raised in its native Lancashire in later years.

MACEDONIA

MAP No. 10



ENVOY

AFTER the epic which has just ended, it would be tedious and an anticlimax to recite in detail the events which befell the battalions of the Regiment still in existence at the time of the Armistice, interesting and colourful as some of them were. Broadly, the units divide themselves into those which went to the Rhine, there to do guard duties, carry out ceremonial parades and otherwise impress the German population, and to be ready to march farther into Germany if there were any breach of the Armistice terms; and those which were set to less spectacular though important duties, guarding dumps and staffing prisoner-of-war, leave and transit camps, in France and Belgium.

In the first category were the 1st, 15th and 16th Battalions, the 15th being disbanded in October, 1919, and its remaining officers and men being posted to the 16th. In the second category came the 2nd, 1st/5th, 2nd/5th, 6th, 1st/7th, 1st/8th, 10th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 23rd Battalions. Dated particulars of their moves are to be found in Volume II, Chapter IV.

Common to all battalions was the gradual process of demobilization, beginning with the dispatch to England of urgently needed coal-miners, of whom the first recorded batch left on 11th December, 1918, from the 18th Battalion; this led to a progressive dwindling of strength, except in the battalions on the Rhine, where the demobilized of the 1st Battalion were gradually replaced by Regular soldiers on long-term engagements and those of the 15th and 16th Battalions by young soldiers on shorter attestations. Common also to all battalions was much educational and physical training, varied with sports and games of many kinds. To the 17th and 18th Battalions fell the distasteful and happily unique task of having to help in the suppression of disorders, amounting almost to mutiny, which had broken out at the end of January, 1919, amongst men in a camp at Calais who were returning from leave and were discontented with the system of demobilization. The firm discipline and admirable tone of these two units, admitted by the rioters and praised by higher authority, did much to bring about a speedy end to the trouble.

Those battalions which were in being in 1914 received back their Colours from England early in 1919: and at about the same time to each of the remainder was given a King's Colour, solemnly consecrated and ceremonially presented by a General Officer at a parade of fitting dignity. Many of these Colours later found honoured resting places in the Parish Church of Saint Mary the Virgin at Bury and in the Church of the Sacred Trinity at Salford, as is described in Volume II, Chapter VI. For gradually the non-Regular battalions followed their members and almost imperceptibly disappeared, though in many cases the civic authorities of their home towns did

honour to their cadres and their Colours when these returned to England.

In 1914, the Regiment had eight battalions. By the middle of 1915, it had twenty-six battalions in being. Its zenith came in the last few months of 1917, when twenty-one of its battalions were actively engaged in France and Flanders and one, the 12th, in Macedonia. Then came a series of disbandments and amalgamations due to the heavy losses of the Third Battle of Ypres and the lack of reinforcements to take their place, until at the time of the Armistice there were fourteen battalions in France and Flanders, the only theatre of war in which the Regiment was then represented. By the natural processes of demobilization, the number of active battalions dwindled by the end of 1919 to three—the 1st in the United Kingdom, the 2nd in India, and the 16th on the Rhine. From this nadir, the Regiment rose again in the summer of 1920 with the revival of the four original Territorial battalions; but this period lies outside the scope of this work.

In the years 1914–1919, members and ex-members of the Regiment earned the following honours and awards :—

Victoria Cross	18
Knight Commander of the Bath	1
Companion of the Bath	7
Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George	1
Companion of St. Michael and St. George	12
Commander of the British Empire	4
Officer of the British Empire	14
Distinguished Service Order (including clasps) ...	80
Member of the British Empire	5
Military Cross (including clasps)	448
Air Force Cross	1
Albert Medal	2
Distinguished Conduct Medal (including clasps) ...	290
Military Medal (including clasps)	1,273
Meritorious Service Medal	87
Foreign decorations	180
Mentions in Despatches and names brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for War ...	617

The cost in lives was 13,642 all ranks killed and died of wounds and disease. "Live happie spirits, th' honour of your name, and fill the world with never dying fame!" The number of other casualties cannot be ascertained.

These lives, these casualties, the deeds which earned these honours and awards, and many other unrecorded deeds which had to be their own reward, all together made the story which has been told in this work and earned for the Regiment lasting recognition from the rest of the Army, from the Senior Service with which it was so proud to be associated at Gallipoli, from the County Palatine of Lancaster, and from far and wide, of its right to its motto :—

"OMNIA AUDAX"

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NOTES.—(*a*) Place-names outside the United Kingdom have as a rule been included in the Index only when connected with major events.

(*b*) For reasons of space, personal names recorded in the text in connexion with decorations only have not been repeated in the Index.

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